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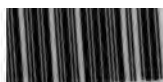
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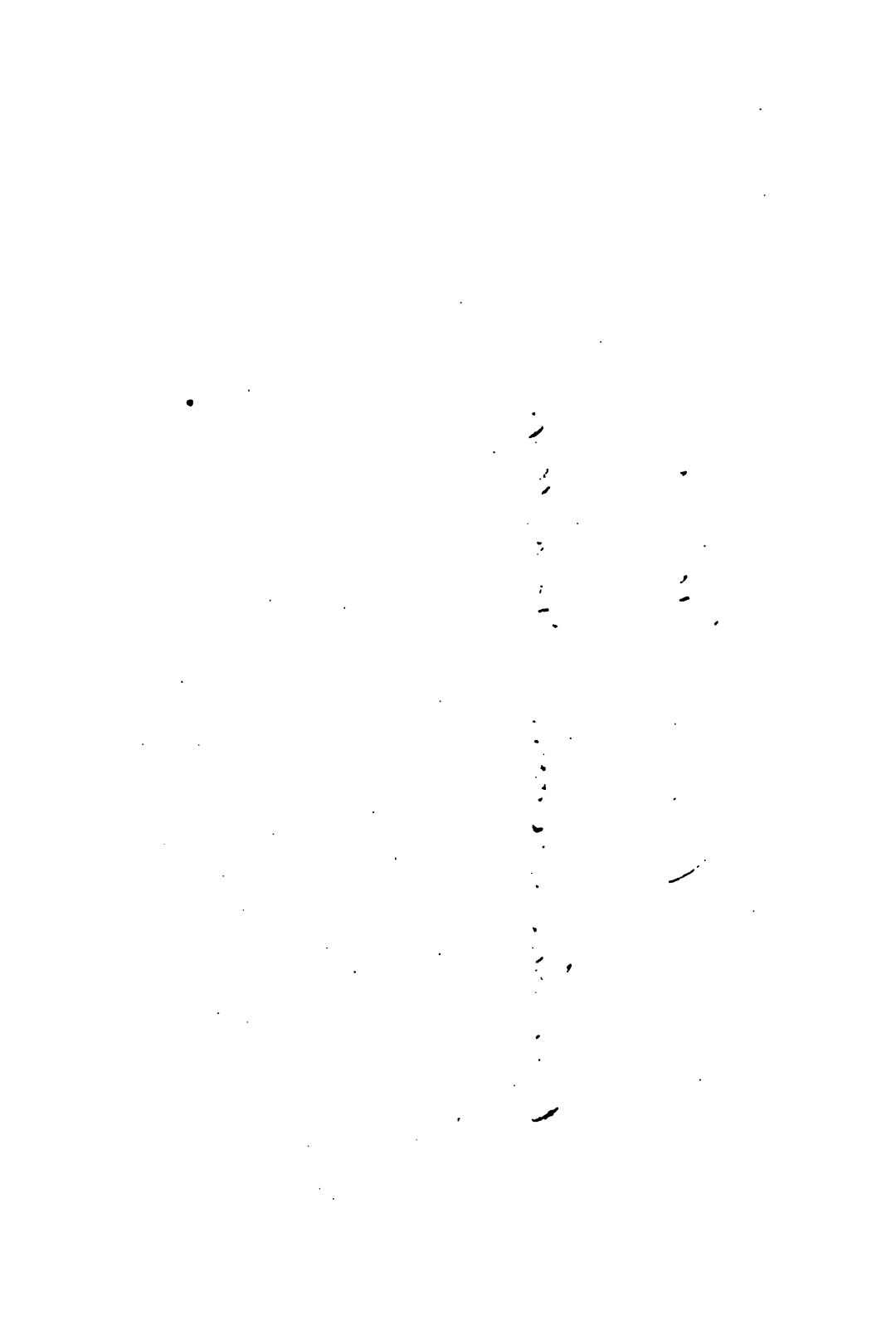
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# ANNE CAVE.

A TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

KENNER DEENE,

AUTHOR OF

"The Dull Stone House," "The Schoolmaster of Alton," &c.

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# ANNE CAVE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A LITTLE ABOUT YANLY MANOR.

A BLOOD-RED sun dropping behind leafless woods, the sky a pale blue, indistinct and hazy, and tinted with a faint golden vapour sent up from that army of bright clouds which floats away from the sinking orb. It was the evening of a fine February day, the lanes and roads were white and hardened, the grass of the meadows was short, champed up, and all but colourless, and yet the rising undulations of fields, the thick spread clusters of trees, the bright swift stream rushing with

noise and clamour over its rocky bed, the blue grand distant hills formed a scene beautiful with a cold chaste loveliness. It was like the beauty of pure untried youth, of the spirit and the heart that are not yet awakened to the fulness of life, to the sunshine of love, to the blooming flower-wreaths of pleasure, alas! to the scorching lava-tides of passion. The year was in its earliest time, as yet the sprays of the hawthorn were bare, brown, and thorny; the woods were skeletons; only here and there grew clusters of exquisite snow flowers, their white bell scarcely moving in the still, rarefied atmosphere. They gathered about the stems and trunks of the great naked trees, they were in their loveliness and chastity, in complete harmony with the spirit of the hour, and the attributes of the season. A great house stood fronting the dropping sun and distant hills—a house with a heavy portico, and wings to the right and to the left—a stone-coloured dismal looking house, with an untrimmed lawn in front, and frowzy,

neglected shrubberies stretching on each side. It was a house that had been built with a view to appearance, imposing appearance that is, and perhaps in the years that were gone, bright, delicate flowers had embroidered the lawn, and the shrubberies had been cut, and trained, and their spring and summer blossoms had been wreathed into flowery arches, while the turf had sprung velvety from the pressure of the footstep, and had shone in vivid green beneath the sunlight.

Now, all was changed—sheep were feeding, or picking up what sustenance they could from the rank, coarse grass. The flower beds were trampled indiscriminately down; a couple of heavy raw-boned cart horses were straying right before the portico. The house itself was discoloured by weather and neglect, and presented a front of dull-stained yellow. The sinking sun lighted up all the front windows of Yanly Manor, and the red glow gave to the house for a few moments a weird look, as though some unreal sort of fire had

been kindled within it; but this glow lessened and soon died out, and the grey, rapidly-darkening twilight gathered thickly over fell, and wood, and meadow. The house was soon wrapped in shadow, and lights more real appeared in the windows, and blinds were drawn down, and then other lamps were lighted—lamps, in space, distant, and bright, and full of the deepest mysteries that can baffle science, amuse the spirit of poesy, flatter and excite imagination, or feed and fascinate sentiment. Who, with a heart, and a soul, and a mind, has not gazed at the floating moon, sometimes, and sighed strange sighs, and thought strange thoughts? Who has looked up when the heavens have been thickly sown with glancing stars, and not felt creep into his heart a certain faith in the Great Maker of all those glittering wonders? Many doubtless. On such an one did the stars' light fall on the February night we write of. There was a little shrunken man getting towards sixty years old, who was crossing the damp

fields and making all haste in the direction of Yanly Manor ; on his shabby hat and threadbare garments the moonlight glanced with a white ghostly gleam, and the stars seemed to oscillate and vibrate in space, and to look at the shrunken figure and pale hatchet face as though they took an interest in them. Harvey Aubrey, attorney, of Felton, —a little northern town which you will not find on the map, good reader,—Harvey Aubrey, attorney, had other things to think of than glittering stars and floating moon. He was hurrying home from his office now that his business hours were over, he was hurrying home to Yanly Manor, for the great yellow, neglected house, with the frowzy shrubberies and trodden lawn, is his own dwelling, his rightful property ; and all the land that lies around it, and many a snug farm, belongs to him also. Harvey Aubrey is a rich man. Years ago he advanced money on Yanly Manor, and the foolish spendthrift owner went on rioting and wantoning until at

last the whole estate was drawn into the net of the sharp, knowing attorney. The Haughtons, the proud, foolish, wasteful, family had but one child, and she was a daughter. There had been a son, who had died abroad, a victim it was rumoured to dissipation and intemperance. As some compensation to the beggared owner, Harvey Aubrey offered to marry the daughter, so that the estate (it was not entailed) should still descend to the seed of the Haughtons. Maude Haughton had loved an officer, who deserted her, and in her wounded pride and venomous rancour she gave herself to Harvey Aubrey, the grasping, griping, hard-fisted attorney. They had one son born to them, whom they christened Robert. Soon after his birth Harvey and his wife were separated, for what reason it was never clearly understood, but Mrs. Aubrey went to France, where she resided until the boy was two years old, then she died, it seemed suddenly. When the news came, Harvey went over to the Continent to follow her funeral, returned

with a black band round his hat, and attended his office regularly, and always wore the same keen cold mask. He was heaping up riches now for his son Robert. When Robert came to the age of four years, Harvey, not deterred by the ill success of his first matrimonial speculation, embarked a second time on the same perilous ocean where so many vessels are hopelessly stranded. This time he married a beauty, a cold, calculating girl, with no fortune, no family, and—but as she will play a prominent part in this tale, we will not describe her further. With her Harvey lived in apparent peace. At the time when our story opens she had three children; George, now in the Guards, a fashionable youth of twenty-three; Emily, one year younger; and Elsie, a child of twelve. There was, besides, the step-son Robert, five years older than the Guards-man, and he was the heir of Yanly Manor and Estate.

## CHAPTER II.

## DINNER AND TEA.

WHEN Harvey Aubrey crossed the ragged lawn, he saw a hired vehicle at the door of his house, and he hastened up and peered about, because he was not a man who loved to see hired vehicles near his dwelling; they suggested thoughts of visitors and expense, and neither of these did the shrunken attorney at all affect. But he found darkness in the great stone hall, he had forbidden the burning of a lamp on economical principles. Thus he went groping his way over the cold stones, carefully evading contact with the pillars, and finally his efforts were rewarded. He found the dining room, opened the door, and made his way to the fire-place, where



burnt a very tolerable fire—there were some paper spills on the grey marble mantel shelf, and two wax candles in plated candlesticks. Harvey Aubrey put a spill in the fire and lighted one candle, this he put upon the long table. At one end of the table was laid a carving knife and fork—a smaller knife and fork for personal use. At the other end was a tray, on which were cups and saucers and a metal tea pot. A large loaf and a butter boat lay between the tray at one end and the carving knife at the other. There was a sideboard of dingy mahogany, there were chairs with dingy mahogany backs and red chintz seats. The carpet was of faded red, ragged in some places—patched in others. The windows were hung with damask curtains, that had gradually changed from brilliant scarlet to dingy red, and now the red was fast becoming a brownish neutral tint. Harvey Aubrey spent nothing on furniture; nothing on dress, as his own amply testified; nothing on gardening—nothing, in fact, on decoration of

any kind. It was all very well in its way so long as it did not interfere with his hoards, but the attorney was a miser at heart, in habits, in principles, in countenance, in gait; that is, the whole bent of the man's inner self held such sway on his outward seeming, that every beggar instinctively turned away from him, knowing that it would have been lost labour to appeal to the pity or benevolence of the shrunken, hard-featured miser; and yet old Aubrey had always a paste-board smile about the region of the lower jaw; he was by no means a cruel man; he was not a violent man; he was even indulgent where indulgence cost him nothing. If he had ever in his time of gladsome youth possessed a heart (and it is probable that he had), although that desirable commodity has now dried up, and collapsed, and all its affections were concentrated in his gold bags; still if he ever had a heart, I would not say that he had never loved, never shed salt tears, never been willing to yield up self, never been tender, and

watchful, and anxious, and fond. Now his whole being was as changed (admitting the hypothesis that he ever had been different), as was the face of the lawn and grounds surrounding Yanly—frosted, rugged, unlovely, as was the neglected garden. He went up to the mantel-shelf and rang the bell. It was a long time before anybody answered the summons, and when that event transpired Harvey asked for his dinner. “Where are the young ladies?” he added.

“In missus’s room, sir, with Miss Cave.”

The little woman who spoke was a neat, dressy person, whom some people called pretty and some thought plain. She had dark hair and eyes, and rather a fresh complexion, but she was slightly scarred by the small pox, and possessed a wide mouth. Emma was the laundry maid at Yanly Manor, and she united the functions of house maid and waitress occasionally to her other duties. Emma’s voice was excessively soft; she delighted in creating a sensation, and in

announcing startling news, and all in a whispery low tone, which sometimes added a seasoning to her communications.

"Miss Cave—who is Miss Cave?" asked Harvey Aubrey, quickly.

"Well, sir, I'm sure I can't say," returned Emma, mysteriously. "She came in a fly from Felton, she's a pale young lady in black, very staid looking, and missus has been busy talking to her this long time; they are quite private, sir, and the door is locked."

"I want my dinner, Emma," said Harvey Aubrey, taking off his hat and unbuttoning his great coat; "can I have it?"

"Well, sir, I believe as all the cold meat was minced for missus and the young ladies, and I'm afraid Rebecca hasn't put nothing by—it's always the way with Rebecca, sir."

Then Emma went out. It is more than probable that Harvey Aubrey took a fair estimate of her chief characteristic, for when she came in shortly with a small roast fowl and baked potatoes, and placed them at the

foot of the table near the carving knife, he expressed no surprise, but sat down to his solitary meal.

Emma then brought him a flagon of ale and a tumbler, and the attorney ate and drank with relish.

"Please, sir, shall I light the other candle?"

"No, Emma, one is sufficient to eat by; waste not, want not, you know, Emma."

"Yes, sir," said Emma, softly and submissively, "I think as waste is one of the wickedest things as is—"

Just then there was a rustle of women's dresses in the wide stone hall, the door was opened, and the two daughters of the house of Aubrey came in.

"Emma, does the kettle boil?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Stop, then, while I make mamma's tea, and you can take it up; Miss Cave will remain with her while we have tea."

"Who is Miss Cave?" asked Harvey Aubrey.

"She is to be Elsie's governess, papa; you know you wouldn't have her sent to school, and there is no use wasting her time, she is growing such a great girl. Stand out of the way, Elsie, or you will be scalded with the kettle."

Elsie came up to her father. She was a rough, romping girl, with great blue eyes, rosy cheeks, tangled brown hair, and girt about with a large, dingy pinafore; excessively childish and boyish was Elsie, by no means one of the dainty and precocious misses of twelve years old, who abound at the present day, and give their minds to crinoline, delicate complexion, and the shades and delineations of eye brows and eye lashes. This tale dates forty years back; the style of dress was scanty then, and hair was turned up tightly and neatly behind, *à la guillotine*, and placed in narrow bands or round flat curls on the forehead in front, but the tresses of Elsie Aubrey hung about in wild confusion. Her very shoes were mud stained; she was pretty, but she knew nothing about it.

"Come here, Pip," said Harvey Aubrey, snapping his fingers at his youngest daughter.

So Pip went close to him.

"You are to have a governess, Pip."

"I've got her," said Elsie.

"How do you like her, Pip?"

"I hate her!" said the young lady, vehemently.

Harvey Aubrey laughed and seemed delighted.

"Why, Elsie, you don't know anything about the lady."

"Bless you, I know enough," said Elsie, nodding her head. "All governesses are the same—all beasts."

After making this sweeping assertion, Miss Elsie swung her chair roughly up to the table, seated herself, and clamoured loudly for tea. By this time Emma had taken a tray with a cup and saucer, and a plate of hot buttered toast, out of the room, for Mrs. Aubrey.

"Now, Elsie," said Miss Aubrey, "you shall have your tea, but do not make such a noise."

"I should like some of papa's potatoes," said Elsie, drumming on the table, "if he can spare them—not unless."

"I can spare you the dishful, Pip," said Harvey Aubrey, passing her the article in question. "I don't care for potatoes."

So Elsie mashed her potatoes up with milk—a mixture she was very fond of, and ate a hearty meal.

"Papa, would you like some tea?" said Miss Aubrey.

"Yes, my dear; no cream, thank you."

While the father eats his dinner at one end and the daughter pours out the tea at the other, let us try and describe Emily Aubrey. She was surpassingly lovely; colouring, and shape, and shading, and height, and breadth, and proportion, were touched with a glow and a delicacy, and an exquisite conception that gave you the impression that this was no potter's vessel, none of those which are made to dishonour, but one of the master pieces of Nature's handy work—a vessel wrought unto



honour so far as the outward seeming was concerned. Chesnut tresses, sprinkled with gold ; dark, delicate eyebrows ; a low, white, square forehead ; full, lustrous, hazel eyes ; a Grecian nose, and mouth, and chin ; a peach-like bloom on the cheeks ; and a graceful, fragile, finely-rounded figure. She wore a dress of dark mulberry-coloured cloth—plain to Quakerism. Harvey Aubrey looked at his beautiful daughter and smiled ; he was satisfied in contemplating her that he need never fear about her future. She was handsome enough to marry a lord.

## CHAPTER III.

ANNE CAVE.

"Now I think, Elsie, you had better go up to mamma, and send Miss Cave down to her tea."

Elsie's mouth was full of bread and butter, but that did not prevent her answering her sister.

"I'm not going till I've done my tea."

"Make haste, then, pray, because it will look so queer to Miss Cave to send her down if I am not here to receive her."

"Look queer! Why should it look queer? Let it look queer, who cares?"

"Pip is a saucy Pip," said Harvey Aubrey, laughing.

"Pip," said Elsie, pushing back her seat

and turning towards the door, "is going to send old Cave down."

"Is she old?"

"Yes," said Elsie, "forty or fifty I should think."

"Nineteen or twenty, papa," said Emily.

Elsie went out of the room; five minutes after Miss Cave entered. She bowed timidly to Harvey Aubrey, and Emily begged her to be seated, and inquired politely if she took sugar and cream. Miss Cave was a slight, pale, prim girl of twenty, with dark brown hair, rather fine dark eyes, undefined feminine features, and a complexion which was good inasmuch as it was clear, but it was untouched by colour, so that as she sat at the tea table, in her black travelling dress, she looked an insignificant little girl enough, whom a casual and careless observer would scarcely have noticed a second time. Let me give a slight retrospective glance at the antecedents of the governess. They had not been brilliant, they had not been dyed in rosy

colours, nor led her along a flowery pathway. Youth had scarcely been a golden epoch to her. Poverty had come in at her door in her veriest childhood, had placed its slurring hand over her brightest fancies, and taught her to regard her sunniest hopes and most innocent pleasures as follies. Poverty had stood on her hearth stone, and caused the fire to burn dimly. Poverty had hardened the couch on which she slept, had sat at the board when she ate, and had fed her only with the coarsest and most tasteless of all viands. Poverty had clothed her in scanty and unbecoming raiment, had made her mother's voice harsh to her, had, in fact, so punished and thwarted her all her life long, had so poisoned her joys and filled her young mind with prescient cares, that at twenty Anne Cave was in some respects older at heart than many a woman twice her age. Some will say this was an advantage; some will say that the staid, wise little woman was all the more fitted, from her hard training, to do battle with the

temptations and trials that lay before her—perhaps so, and yet methinks this repression of youth is a sad, sad sight. A solemn-faced governess, who must only laugh and talk to order, whose whole life is devoted to instructing, and who is so reckoned and talked of as the governess, the machine for the proprieties, is an unnatural sight. And these beings have oftentimes fiery blood, and passionate hearts, and feverish longings for love and home and happiness. If ever one of these creatures betray that she is a woman, that she has a soul, that she can love, and hate, and scheme, that she can feel slights and resent injuries, what surprise is manifested. What an improper person that governess is! What an unprincipled woman! No worse than other women, good reader. No worse and no better, only the fetters which society imposes have become too galling, and she has flung them off. Anne Cave had been trained for a governess. Poverty had been her first task-mistress; conventionality was to be her

second. The girl had been accustomed to repression, to self-denial, to renunciation. She expected no other—did she crave it? unconsciously, if at all. She had been educated at the Clergy Daughters' School, in her own county—the adjoining one to that where Yanly Manor stood. Her father—a poor curate—had died in her infancy, and her mother, the widow Cave, had earned a precarious living for her two children by keeping a day school. The mother was harsh to the girl, wholly devoted to the boy; the latter was now in a bank at Carlisle, and the quiet Anne had come, well recommended, from her school, to fill the position of governess in the family of Harvey Aubrey. She was to have twenty pounds a-year—half was to go to her mother. Clothing did not cost so much in those days, reader, as it costs now. It was not necessary to dress so well.

## CHAPTER IV.

MRS. AUBREY.

THAT night, when Anne Cave was undressing in her little scantily furnished bed room, arranging her few possessions, and perhaps wondering how she should like her new position, there came a soft tap at her door, she said "Come in," and thereupon there walked in Emma, the little, soft-spoken laundry maid.

"Please, miss, can I do anything for you?" asked Emma.

"There is no water," said Anne, looking into the jug.

"I'll bring you some in a minute, miss, and shall I turn the bed down?"

Emma brought in a can of water, filled the jug, and still lingered busily doing nothing.

"I hope you'll be happy here, miss."

"Thank you, Emma."

"You've seen missus, av'ent you, miss?"

"Yes."

"She's been a beautiful lady in her time, miss."

"She must have been."

"Mr. Aubrey, poor gentleman, he was fond of her, much fonder than of his first wife."

"Had he another wife?"

"Yes, miss; Mr. Robert's mother, such a handsome, nice young gentleman, Mr. Robert—missus can't bear him," dropping her voice.

"Where is he now?"

"In France, and Master George he's a beautiful young gentleman. Missus loves the ground he walks on."

"Oh."

"I hope you'll be happy, miss."

"I hope I shall."

"Good night, miss."



“ Good night, Emma.

The next day Anne Cave went again into the presence of Mrs. Aubrey, who having a delicate chest always kept her room in severe weather like the present. It was a large handsome room. Some of Harvey Aubrey’s money had been settled on her at her marriage, and out of the small private income she enjoyed the lady contrived to surround herself with comforts. She was a beautiful woman at forty eight, with perfect features, hair black, glossy, and as yet untouched with grey. Colour had deserted her cheeks and lips, but lustre had not gone out of her deep blue eyes. The governess did not altogether like the face; it was so cold, the expression was so statue like, and somehow the eyes made her shrink from their bright glances.

“ Good morning, Miss Cave,” said the lady, kindly; “ sit down,” and Miss Cave sat down.

Mrs. Aubrey was breakfasting at a little table near the fire. She wore a handsome

crimson dressing gown, of embroidered cashmere.

"Have you breakfasted?"

"No, ma'am."

"Then will you take a cup of chocolate?"

"No, thank you."

"It is cold this morning. Do you admire the view from the front window?"

"Very much."

"Are you an enthusiastic admirer of nature?"

"Yes, Mrs. Aubrey," said Anne. "I wish I could paint."

"Oh, you can't paint?"

"No, ma'am."

"That is rather a pity. I forgot to mention painting. But now, Miss Cave, I wish to speak to you about Elsie. She is a child whom I cannot manage; her impertinence is unbearable, and from some strange caprice or whim on the part of Mr. Aubrey, he aids and abets that child in her habitual insubordination to me; this is hard to bear. Christine, my maid, can do nothing with her—her sis-

ter can do nothing with her. She cannot write or spell. She is as dirty and ill-behaved as any plough boy on any farm on the estate, and yet she spends much of her time reading the most trashy novels she can pick up among the servants. Miss Cave, do you not pity me with such a child? Will you aid and abet me in trying to make something at least decent of her? You have been brought up at a school, and you know what habits of order are."

Anne promised faithfully to do her best.

"One word more," said Mrs. Aubrey: "I trust you will not have any designs on *my sons*. Nay, start not. I do not mean to offend you, but I know what young girls are, and I would not have any nonsense, Miss Cave, going on under this roof. You seem to me to be quiet and sensible; let me tell you a little of my sons. Robert, the eldest," (here the woman's cheek did glow through the sallow skin, and the lights from the eye shone forth strangely), "Robert, the eldest, is a re-

probate, a gambler—I believe a seducer and a drunkard; in fact, a rascal; even his father has found him out, and will scarcely speak to him. He is often at home, leading a life of idleness and debauchery; he cannot get money from his father. Miss Cave, be warned of him, shun him as you would a viper. George, my second son, is an officer in the Guards; he is a gentleman—a true Aubrey of the gallant stock. Miss Cave, I am proud of my son, George. He is not much at home. Now you know what you have to do, to try and break Elsie in, to steer clear of my step-son, Robert, and I will be your friend. Your salary is paltry, but fear not, I will make it up to you in other ways. Do you understand much French?"

"Grammatically" Anne explained, "Yes."

"Conversationally?"

"No."

"Ah, well, that does not so much matter, yet I hope we shall go abroad, you and all, next year."

"Music?"

"Yes."

Anne delighted in music.

"Well," said Mrs. Aubrey, somewhat wearily, "you will know best how to go on, but make Elsie mind you, Miss Cave."

Anne, as though the conversation were ended, rose and respectfully took leave.

"A pale, quiet, harmless creature," said Mrs. Aubrey to herself. "A strange, fearful woman," said Anne to herself, "why expose her family matters to me; this dislike of her step-son, why not conceal it, at least for decency's sake. She has the look of a woman who could conceal anything to answer her purpose. Evidently then, it does not answer her purpose to hide that she hates her son. Stinginess, anyhow, does not appear to be among Mrs. Aubrey's faults."

"Oh, here you are," said the voice of Elsie, "and now I suppose you have been hearing mamma speak bad of me, haven't you?"

"Your mamma has been talking to me

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about several things, Elsie," Anne answered, "not only about you. Now I want you to show me the way to your school room, that I may examine you, and commence a regular plan of lessons. I want to time it nicely, so that you may have regular hours for everything, for lessons, and playing, and walking, and all."

"That's kind of you," said Elsie, "to think of my playhours."

"Of course," returned Anne, "I must think of your amusements and happiness as well as of your studies, otherwise you would never love me; and if you do not learn to love me, Elsie, I shall not remain at Yanly Manor."

Elsie's eyes brightened. "Do you really care for my love?" she asked.

"Yes, Elsie, I should think there must be something very wrong somewhere, either with you or me, if we did not love each other fondly in a short time."

"Of course you'd say the wrong lay with

me," said Elsie, leaning in a dangerous way over the banister.

"Don't do that, dear," said the governess, nervously. "You might pitch over and be killed instantly."

"Bless your life!" said Elsie, "I always ride down on the banisters. I can't walk down stairs."

"I had a school-fellow," said Anne, "whose little brother was killed, doing that very thing. I shall never forget the poor girl's agony when she received the letter to tell of his death, and I always feel horribly afraid ever since when I see children sliding down in that way."

"Perhaps he didn't take care," said Elsie, "to balance himself properly. I can do it first-rate; look here!" and she prepared to shew her skill.

"Don't, don't!" said Anne, holding her gently back, "you might do it safely five hundred times, and the next time be killed."

Elsie yielded. Anne saw that the child

might be led with a silken thread ; she had great hopes of her. They adjourned to the school-room, and Anne found the child extremely backward in many things. She read well, but her pronunciation was more like that of a farmer's daughter than a gentleman's child.

"How is it, Elsie, that you speak so badly?" asked Anne.

"Why," said Elsie, colouring deeply, "it's the servants I go among so much, I suppose."

"Then, Elsie, don't go among them so much ; would you not wish to be a lady when you are grown up?"

"I shall be a lady," said Elsie, somewhat haughtily. "My father is a gentleman, though he is an attorney, and ours is the oldest family in the county."

"I know that," said the governess, "but people would wonder all the more to find a gentleman's daughter pronouncing like a dairy maid, and unable to write a lady-like letter."

Elsie seemed quite wounded ; tears sprang



to her eyes, and she turned her back sulkily upon her governess.

“Remember,” said Anne, gently, “that you are only a little girl now, and you are so healthy and rosy that your out-door life must have done you good in one sense, as a child—you need not colour or be ashamed, it is only in some years’ time that you would do that.”

“Then you think I may learn it all if I try every day.”

“I am sure of it, dear Elsie. Now let me lay down a regular plan for every day; but you must help me; tell me what time you breakfast?”

“Nine o’clock.”

“Well then, let us get up at seven. We shall be dressed before eight, and we shall have more than an hour for a walk, a lovely cool walk before breakfast in the summer. At half-past nine we will go into school, and as you are to learn music, you will have so much to do, that I shall have to keep you till

half-past twelve. Then what time do you dine?"

"Now that we have no company, we all dine together at four o'clock ; me, and Ma, and Emily, and you, of course."

"Well then you can do as you please from half-past twelve till three ; you can play or walk, or what you like, but I hope you will ask my advice about it, and I shall never like to hear of your helping the stable boys, Elsie. Then at three you must come and dress for dinner, and talking of dress, Elsie, you are very untidy, I must say ; such a torn cotton frock, and such rough hair and dirty shoes. You must try and be clean and neat."

"I have nothing but old ragged clothes," said Elsie, loudly. "Mamma does not care how I go. I have only an old merino dress for best on Sundays, and my under-clothes are a shame to be seen ; and, as for Emily, she has beautiful muslins and lovely silks, pink, and blue, and black. Oh, it's a shame, it is indeed !"

"But if you climb trees and go in the stables it would be waste to give you silks, Elsie; besides, you might have clean shoes and smooth hair always. However, you shall shew me your clothes, and if they are as bad as you say, I will ask your mamma to let you have some new frocks."

Elsie was charmed. Nearly all girls of all ages find the promise of new dresses irresistible. She threw her arms round Anne's neck and exclaimed, "Dear Miss Cave, you are good. Will you try and get me a blue silk for best—a light sky blue for Sundays; I will take such care of it. But don't tell mamma I want it, or she would never let me have it. Pretend I hate a blue silk and then she'll get me one."


"No, Elsie, I'll pretend nothing and tell nothing but the truth; still I will try and get you the blue silk notwithstanding."

Anne tried and she succeeded.

## CHAPTER V.

## ROBERT AUBREY.

Mrs. AUBREY appeared quite surprised on hearing of the forlorn condition of Elsie's wardrobe, and one morning the carriage was ordered, and Miss Aubrey invited the governess to accompany her to the county town of Felton, on a shopping expedition, and Mrs. Aubrey gave her several pounds to make what purchases she chose for her little pupil. Elsie did not accompany them, but Anne set her mind at rest by faithfully promising the blue silk frock, and Elsie on her part promised to amuse herself in the gardens or house, and not to go into the stables. Felton is prettily situated. It is surrounded by mountains and woods. The principal street is a busy one on



the market day. Anne felt in good spirits; everybody was kind to her—from Mrs. Aubrey to the lowest servant in the house. She was in high health and cheerful, and the little excursion to Felton was a delightful era in her existence. She had bought the much coveted blue silk, and was now choosing some neat morning wrappers, while Emily was turning over some ribbons and gloves at the other counter, when she heard Emily exclaim, "There's Robert; he passed; now he is coming in; how unlucky! we shall have him with us all day."

She turned, and saw a young man of noble presence, who hastily approached Miss Aubrey, and she heard Emily say :

"Why, Robert, I thought you were in Paris!"

"So I was, three days ago," answered a singularly sweet voice.

Anne busied herself with her purchases, feeling all the time a strong inclination to turn round and take another survey of the heir of Yanly Mannor.

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"Are you coming home?" asked Emily, coldly.

"Yes," answered young Aubrey. "I suppose you have room in the carriage?"

"Indeed, I don't know," said Emily, tartly; "Miss Cave, Elsie's governess, has been buying such a heap of things, that they will take up quite one seat of the carriage."

"Then I must hire a fly from the 'Crown,' " said the young man, in a hard, impassable manner.


The purchases were now completed, and a shopman tied up the last parcel, and promised to send them at once to the "Crown." Anne, therefore, crossed over towards Miss Aubrey, who seemed inclined to prolong her scrutiny of the ribbons. Emily just lifted up her lovely face from the counter, and said:—"Miss Cave—my brother Robert;" and then again busied herself with the ribbons. Anne felt her cheek glow like fire; somehow or other all the tales and warnings she had received about Robert Aubrey had only con-

spired to make her feel a strange interest in him, which neither her prudence nor calmness could prevent. She scarcely looked at him then. She was dimly conscious of his bowing and saying something, coldly, about the weather, and he left the shop; evidently the interest was not mutual. Why did the consciousness of this strike even then on the quiet, pale Cumberland girl with a feeling nearly akin to pain? "Miss Cave, be warned of my step-son, Robert; shun him like a viper," Mrs. Aubrey had said. Did he not shun her? would he not spare her the trouble? she asked herself. The next moment she could have laughed at herself for a simpleton.

They were now in the street, bearing towards the hotel where the carriage was in waiting. Robert stood at the door, carelessly twisting about his cane; as they passed in Anne heard him say:—

"I am going to see if these wonderful purchases of this governess are really to turn me out of the carriage."

She felt ready to cry with shame and anger. "This governess;" he spoke in a contemptuous, scornful tone, not like a man, a gentleman, as she said to herself, thus to pour insults on one so unprotected. She felt sure, now, she should hate him, and the feeling lasted full ten minutes, lasted until the poor purchases were safely stowed away on the back seat, and room was made for all, and she had been seated sometime opposite to Robert Aubrey, and her eyesight had drunk in the full consciousness of his godlike beauty; his height was majestic and his form perfect; long, muscular, graceful limbs, and an air of the most perfect self-possession. She had an ideal in her fancy, and Robert Aubrey was its living personation. There were the crisp, glossy curls of a bright chestnut, pushed carelessly from a brow almost as snowy as Emily's. The lower part of the face was tanned to a manly brown, and ruddy was the rich glow of youth and health; a fine silky moustache shaded, while it did not





conceal, a most exquisite mouth; the short upper lip had a curve of pride, which sat not ill upon it; the teeth gleamed like ivory whenever he spoke or smiled. He was like Emily, but there was far more of intellectual expression in his face than in hers. His nose was a fine decided aquiline, his eyes a deep violet blue; he was now seven and twenty. He looked at Anne, so she thought, as he would have looked at a lady's maid or a nurse girl, whom chance had compelled him to ride a few miles with. He spoke but seldom, and then, though his voice was sweet, his words were few and cold. Such was Robert Aubrey outwardly.

Anne was no great physiognomist; had she been she might have searched long before she could have found the signs of the drunkard or the sensualist in the small haughty mouth and the white intellectual forehead, or read aught but what a true English gentleman would care to have read in the fearless-looking, bright blue eyes; as it was, she looked at him, murmuring to herself:—

“ Drunkard, gambler, rascal. Mrs. Aubrey, Mrs. Aubrey, these were your words. I read no traces of these things in the face of your step-son.”

The pleasant drive was soon over, soon at least to Anne, who enjoyed leaning back on the soft cushions and observing the lovely country through which they passed; but now the gates of Yanly Manor were closed behind them, and soon they found themselves approaching the house.

Elsie ran out to meet them full of enthusiasm and her blue silk, but the sight of Robert put all other ideas to flight. He told the driver to stop, and then he leant over and lifted Elsie into the carriage; and the young man, hitherto so cold and impassable, quite won our Anne by his affection for his little sister. He pressed her in his arms, covered her with kisses, and could not do enough to show his love and tenderness.

“ Oh, Robert, darling Robert,” said Elsie, “ when did you come back. Oh! I am so happy. Oh, Robert, how I do love you.”

"Elsie," said Emily, "how often have you been told the show of such violent feeling is most unladylike. I am sure Miss Cave will tell you the same."

It was the first time Anne had felt angry with Emily; it was cruel to deprive her thus of a right to express her own natural feelings. But what could she do, a quiescent governess? And she saw Robert Aubrey's looks fastened on her with cold dislike and contempt; so twice in one day she had been held up to his eyes in a disagreeable light, and the third time it was reserved for Mrs. Aubrey to put her to the torture.

While she was dressing for the four o'clock dinner Elsie burst into her room.

"Miss Cave, will you do my hair very nicely for me to-day, there's a dear, I want Robert to see me look nice."

"Yes, Elsie, certainly, but you don't ask after your blue silk, there it is on the bed; open the paper and tell me how you like the colour."

"Oh, beautiful!" exclaimed Elsie. "Dear Miss Cave, I do love you already, but do you know I am afraid Robert does not like you at all," and she shook her head wisely.

Anne could not help asking what he said of her.

"Nothing much; only when I told him how fond I was of you, he put on his proud, hard look, which I don't like."

"Well," said Anne, "it can't possibly matter to me what opinion Mr. Robert Aubrey may be pleased to form of me."

Her words were false, false even then in that early stage of her acquaintance with Robert Aubrey, but her manner deceived her little auditor, who drew a long sigh and said:

"Well, it can't be helped, but it's a pity you and Robert dislike each other so much, and I am so fond of you both."

They went in to dinner. Elsie's curls were nicely brushed, and in her white frock and a new blue sash Anne had brought from Felton she looked quite pretty. Robert was in the

dining room, and little withered, whiteheaded Harvey Aubrey, in breeches and white silk stockings. The father of Robert was talking earnestly :

“ You have disappointed me,” Anne heard him say in a querulous voice, “ and I fear that what your mother says of you is correct.”

Here he caught sight of the governess, and his little daughter ; he took her hand affectionately and then led her towards Miss Cave. He said :

“ My little girl tells me you are very good to her, very good ; I thank you for this. My little girl is the greatest comfort I have. I am at great expense and have many cares, but I shall always feel grateful to you.”

Anne bowed, and he held out his hand ; she shook hands with him, he seemed to have taken a great fancy to her, and he smiled quite kindly, even affectionately, at her, and said he hoped she would be happy at Yanly Manor.

"I am sorry," continued the owner of fifteen thousand a-year, "that my means will not allow me to make it more worth your while to remain here, but I have a most expensive family—six hundred a year I am obliged to pay to Mrs. Aubrey by our marriage settlement, and what she contrives to do with it, goodness alone knows."

"But, papa," said Elsie, "you have thousands and thousands of pounds in the bank, all the while, though you keep saying you are poor, and I call it telling stories, and so does Miss Cave."

"Oh, Elsie," cried Anne, "how can you talk so? I never even have mentioned your papa's name to you in my life."

"I know you have not," said Elsie, "but if ever I am going to tell a little fib, ever so little a fib, you always stop me, that's all I meant to say."

Mr. Harvey Aubrey laughed a little feeble weak laugh, and then shook hands again with Anne, and begged her to make herself at ease.

"She says what she likes to me," he continued, patting Elsie's head.

Just then Mrs. Aubrey entered, dressed in a rich black silk, a heavy gold chain round her neck, and her hair confined in a golden net. She positively looked magnificent, but Anne fancied she was indebted to art for the delicate glow on her hitherto perfectly sallow cheek.

"Is not the dinner ready, Mrs. Aubrey," said the husband.

Then she turned towards her step-son with a glance of positive aversion, which he answered by a defiant look; his lip curled into a look of withering scorn, and he bowed low to his step-mother. She did not return his obeisance, but said simply :

"This is unexpected—I thought you were in Paris."

"So did Emily," he replied, "but you see I was in Felton; you were mistaken."

Emily entered and the party sat down to dinner; it was a formal meal, but Anne's

drive had given her an appetite, and so far as the mere eating was concerned, she enjoyed it amazingly. All the while she was speculating on Harvey Aubrey, she was wondering how it could have been that the rich old gentleman could have possibly flown to his gold bags for consolation.

As they were leaving the room Mrs. Aubrey signified to Anne that she wished to see her in her room, to consult about the new dresses she had purchased for Elsie; accordingly the governess was soon seated *tête à tête* with Mrs. Aubrey, with the rolls of silks and muslins between them. Anne afterwards found that she had really no wish nor choice as to how the things were to be made up, for the whole care of the arrangements fell ultimately on her unassisted self; for Elsie, poor darling, her mother had never much love, or even care; she was simply ashamed of the untidy, ill-mannered, untaught child, and wished to mould her on a more fashionable model; this was why she had engaged a gov-



erness for Elsie, but she took no trouble herself about the child.

Poor warm-hearted, unloved, little one!

"We must engage a dressmaker from Felton," said Mrs. Aubrey at length, somewhat wearily.

Anne thought it was the signal for her departure, but no—Mrs. Aubrey begged her to re-seat herself, and to give her an opinion on some cameos she had in her jewel case. While she was turning these over, quite unable to form an opinion on them, for she had never seen a cameo before, a rap sounded on the door.

"Come in," said Mrs. Aubrey; and there entered Robert Aubrey. He looked confused, flushed, and his air of self-possession was replaced by one of extreme uneasiness. He glanced towards the governess in an anxious manner, and she prepared to quit the chamber. To her intense amaze, Mrs. Aubrey called her back.

"Where are you going, Miss Cave? I want you here particularly."

"I thought, ma'am, you were engaged," said Anne.

"Why should you think that?" she asked, coldly.

"I have something to say to you, Mrs. Aubrey," began Robert.

"Pray, pray, make haste," answered his step-mother. "I am in no mood for a long business discussion."

"Of course I wish to speak to you privately," said Robert, hotly.

"Do you?" she asked, insolently; "then allow me to say, I do not wish to speak to you, except before a witness."

"Then, Mrs. Aubrey!" exclaimed Anne, "I will go, and summon Miss Aubrey."

"Not so," she answered obstinately; "I wish to have you for a witness; do you understand, and if you leave the room you will incur my displeasure."

Anne glanced about in despair; but she was afraid of that woman, so she seated herself.

"I will speak to you another time then," said Robert.

"If you do not speak now," said his step-mother, "I will never hear what you have to say."

There was no softening that woman, nor cowering her, nor terrifying her, nor anything else, and Robert seated himself doggedly, and began thus:

"You are aware, Mrs. Aubrey, that my father only allows me seventy pounds a year for my private expenses."

"I am not aware," she answered; "I know nothing of what your father allows you; I never interfere in your concerns."

"Never?" he asked, in a bitter tone, while pent-up passion blanched his cheek. "Mrs. Aubrey, did you say never?"

She was cruel enough to laugh insultingly at him at that moment, and then she said, "Never in money matters."

He mastered his rage by a strong effort, and then continued:

“I am going to lay my case before you, that you may form your own conclusions. Of course, when I am from home, I am led into expenses totally inadequate to my means, and rather than do what I am going to do now, ask a favour of anyone here, I confess that I have gambled, Mrs. Aubrey, not often, nor recklessly; but I have gambled, almost always with success. God is my witness that I have not done this thing from the love of it;” (she smiled sneeringly;) “but through positive want of money. I have contracted a gambling debt of £50, a small pitiful sum, Mrs. Aubrey, out of the abundance that must one day be mine; but it is a friend, who is poor, to whom I owe this, and who stands in need of payment. Now, I ask, as a favour, that you will lend me this sum until the winter, when I purpose going into Italy, as secretary to a nobleman, who will pay me well. If you do not lend me this money, I must raise it on my unentailed property; this would be a pity, and besides, out of the six

hundred a year allowed you by my father, you have never as yet given me a shilling, and I only ask a loan for a short time. My brother George always has, at least, two hundred a year from you in gifts ; therefore, I ask you, I say it again, without a blush."

"I do not think you know how to blush," answered his step-mother ; " here are two statements you have made that ought to cover you with shame ; the one, that you have contracted gambling debts, the other, that you, the heir to a large landed estate, are going to demean yourself by taking the situation of a secretary."

"Madam, how am I to live on seventy pounds a year?"

"I do not know, and I really do not care," she answered ; "but to your request I answer, No. I will not pander to your vices, and I will take care your father does not either."

"Thank you," said Robert, with a voice hoarse with rage ; "this answer is of a piece

with your conduct ever since I can remember. Cruel woman," he added in a louder key, approaching her so closely that Anne almost trembled; "are you a woman at all, or a fiend incarnate, with your hateful voice, and your infernal sneer? Oh! you have done me much evil," he continued, clenching his teeth, and menacing her with his hand; "you have blighted my youth, and you were the bane of my boyhood. Woman, I curse you, from the depths of the heart you have hardened by your cruelty; henceforth you are less than nothing to me. I shall remain here as long as it suits me, because I know your dislike to my presence at Yanly Manor."

"You have heard his language, Miss Cave, because I refused to pay his gambling debts," said Mrs. Aubrey, turning calmly towards Anne, "you are witness to how much I am blessed in my step-son." But her scorn was lost on Robert, he had quitted the room.

Anne soon found that her presence was not desired any longer by Mrs. Aubrey, and as soon

as she could, she escaped, and in a moment she had made up her mind to one thing, that cost her what it might, Robert Aubrey should not misjudge her. She would stand before him in her own character, and not as represented by his mother and sister. She would not have him think her a tool in their hands, ready at all times to witness against him. In the fury he had hurled against his step-mother, he seemed altogether to have overlooked her presence; but she knew when he thought over it calmly, she should be remembered with bitterness, and she resolved this should not be, or that, at least, she would do what she could to prevent it. She did not stay to ask herself whether this was right or wrong; she only hastened down stairs, full of one thought, and seeking one object. As she passed the great drawing-room, she heard a voice which she recognised as Robert's. She pushed open the door, and there indeed he stood; his back was turned towards her, and he must have been soliloquising, for there

was no one in the grand old room but himself. He did not perceive her, and her foot fell noiselessly on the thick but faded carpet. She could see that room often after in imagination, as she saw it then, with its faded splendours of eight and twenty years before, its tarnished gilding and moth-eaten velvet hangings, and the figure of Robert, who stood in the full blaze of the setting sun with his eyes cast over the fair demesne to which he was the heir. She came up close to him; how her heart beat, and how she struggled for utterance; at length she said, in a hurried voice :

“Mr. Aubrey.” He turned round and confronted her, not with scorn, nor with anger, but merely with a sort of cold surprise, which did much towards re-assuring her, though she was at a loss to say wherefore.

“Mr. Aubrey,” she said again; “I have come to ask you not to judge me harshly, because Mrs Aubrey forced me to be a witness of your altercation just now. I am poor; I



am dependent; I am accustomed to submit to the will of others; this is why I remained; but I am ashamed of myself for remaining. At the same time let me tell you also that to-day, when Miss Aubrey said she was sure I must be displeased at Elsie's show of affection, that she quite misjudged me. I was, on the contrary, pleased with it. You may perhaps tell me that the opinion of a being so insignificant as myself is of no consequence to you; to this I would answer, that insignificant as I am, I still have a right to justice with Mrs. Aubrey and yourself."

His eyes lit up with a kind expression; he held his hand towards her, and took hers within it.

"We are then companions in misfortune—is it not so?" he said. "I certainly did feel annoyed at you, a stranger, being witness to a scene so disgraceful as that in Mrs. Aubrey's chamber; but, I assure you, I felt no anger towards you, and as for this morning, if my looks expressed displeasure, they were meant for Emily. Do you think me so weak

as to confound her opinions and ideas with yours, merely because she mentioned your name in an admonitory manner to Elsie? But you will cease, Miss Cave, to care for people's opinions when you have lived a few years longer in the world. You will find, believe me, that in nine cases out of ten the best and purest minded are the most harshly judged. Why not have left me to think you as inimical to me, as Mrs. Aubrey, for some reason of her own, would have had me suppose you? Of what use can I be to you, and what possible harm could my opinion do you? it would only establish your complete sway over Mrs. Aubrey." He spoke good-temperedly, and with a sweet smile.

Anne was satisfied; she therefore replied that she could not bear to be shown in a mean light to him or to anybody else; but that she was now content, as she had justified herself; and she bowed hastily, and was leaving him, when he called her back. She waited to hear what he had to say.

"Miss Cave, you seem to be the very soul of all that is straightforward—will you give me your opinion of my step-mother's conduct, and of mine, just now?"

"I cannot speak of Mrs. Aubrey's conduct," Anne answered. "I am not her judge."

He laughed. "That admits, then, that it does deserve judgment."

"No, Mr. Aubrey: it admits nothing. I am silent altogether on that subject. I was an unwilling witness, and would willingly forget the whole affair."

"At least tell me what you think of my conduct," he pleaded; "do you think I was undutiful to my step-mother?"

Anne was silent.

"Come—do speak; do you think I acted rightly, or wrongly?"

Anne turned against him with his own weapons. "You yourself say that the opinion of the world is not worth caring for. I intend to be silent on the particulars of that interview, and my opinion matters not."

"But your opinion does—you are not of the world—you are a quiet, pure-minded little girl, who has only just left your school-room. Now, I am particularly anxious for your opinion—will you give it me?"

"Then, if I must," Anne said, "it is this: I think it a pity that Mr. Robert Aubrey forgot what was due to himself as a gentleman, and to Mrs. Aubrey, as a lady, and suffered temper to overcome his reason."

He started as though he had been shot, then coloured, and put his hand to his brow.

Anne feared that she had wounded him deeply, and yet she had said nothing with that intention; she therefore added, "Remember, Mr. Aubrey, you forced me to this; no one else will ever hear me allude to this subject, even distantly." She held out her hand as she spoke, for she had every reason to wish to be friendly with him.

He took her hand kindly, but absently. "You can go," he said; "you are a good

girl ; you are in a hurry, I see, to quit me ; you are afraid of one so ungovernable."

"Not so," she answered warmly, "but we have talked long enough." So she left the room ; but she carried the thought of him away with her, and that night she conversed much with him in her dreams ; she had even then begun to make him the hero of her fancy. The memory of the days and weeks that followed seemed afterwards engraven as it were on her heart with a golden pencil. Sweet, happy, bright days, when hope was paramount, when youth was fresh, when love was young, and unconscious of its own existence, when the present seemed like paradise, and the future was scarcely thought of, or if so, only as a world of untasted delight. Elsie's clinging, loving nature, was in itself a source of pleasure to Anne ; the child, hitherto so wild and so untamed, would fly to do her lightest bidding, hang upon her every word and gesture, and tremble at her least glance of anger ; her affectionate heart,

hitherto so restrained in the expression of its feelings, now found a vent for all the pent-up treasures of its true love; she had always fondly loved her father, and her brother Robert; but then she had never known a mother's or a sister's fondness — coldness, indifference, or reproof, were all she had ever experienced from them. Anne was always inclined to regard Elsie with affection, but before she had been a month with the Aubreys, the child seemed almost necessary to her; she could not fathom the reason of the strong love she bore her; perhaps in her case a somewhat cold mother and selfish brother may have predisposed her affections to seek other objects around which to twine themselves. Meanwhile, Elsie's manners visibly improved. She was always neat in her person, attentive to her studies, gentle and submissive to her mother and sister; all was done certainly with the object of pleasing Anne, although habits of order grew with her afterwards. One evening Anne found

her in their school-room, lying on the polished oak floor, and weeping passionately.

"What is the matter, my darling?" she asked. Seating herself on a footstool by her side, she took her hand and pressed it to her lips, but her sobs prevented her answering. Anne bent down and drew the curly head closely towards her, repeating her inquiries. At length she found utterance.

"Oh, Miss Cave, do what I will, mamma will never love me—never, never, never—if I live a hundred years."

Her voice had a low, wailing sound in it as she repeated, "never, never, never," which went to Anne's soul.

"I have tried to be so good," she continued, "to please her and everybody, and when I went to her room just now, without knocking at the door, she—she—she," here Elsie's sobs redoubled, "boxed my ears, and called me a rude, nasty little brat. I had done nothing. Oh, dear, dear, what shall I do?"

"Why, just dry your eyes, and make

yourself quite happy," said a voice at Elsie's elbow.

Anne started—for it was a voice whose tones she already knew too well ; it was growing dusk, and the large room was gradually becoming wrapped in shadow. Robert took a chair, and placed his hand on Elsie's head, where Anne's already rested ; then she instantly drew it away, and Robert laughed a low, musical laugh, peculiarly his own.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Cave," he said ;  
"I did not know your hand was there."

She coloured deeply, but fortunately the darkness shielded her from observation.

"What is the matter with my little Elsie," continued Robert, kindly ; "is it the old tale—Mrs. Aubrey, again ? Well, Elsie, if she is so unkind, remember you are not without friends ; there are still your father, and brother Robert, who love you—are there not ?"

"And Miss Cave," said Elsie.

"And Miss Cave," repeated Robert, a



little coldly ; “ well, Elsie, don’t fret ; you need not love your mother if your mother does not love you ; just let her alone and think no more about her.”

“ But is that right ? ” Anne asked.

“ Yes,” replied Robert, authoritatively. “ I remember the time when I have almost fretted my childish heart out on account of my step-mother’s want of love for me, not to give it a harsher term, and would you consign this poor little one to the like useless fretting and yearning ? No, Miss Cave ! No, Elsie—think no more of Mrs. Aubrey ! ”

Elsie had dried her tears, and was sitting up straight, her childish heart had already taken comfort.

“ It is a strange thing, this human longing after human love ; we all experience it at some time or other of our lives ; to some it is always present.” And he sighed heavily. “ For myself,” he paused, cleared his voice, then continued, “ for myself, I care for no human being, save this little sister of mine,

and please God, while I live, I never shall—it is monstrous, absurd, preposterous—this seeking of affection among strangers; the ties of blood are the only really binding ties, and when by some strange caprice of fate, as in my own case and Elsie's, these ties are but the bonds of hatred and slavery, instead of being the fetters of pure home affection, then God help the unloved son or brother, for if He does not, where shall he find comfort?"

His voice trembled. Anne could almost have fancied he wept, sheltered by the darkness, which now wrapped them all three in its folds. She could scarcely trust her voice to speak. She loved him at that moment. She then became first dimly conscious of the presence of that all-absorbing affection which afterwards sapped her very existence with its withering influences. Yet, how weak and dim and feeble was that love in comparison to what it afterwards became.

"You disbelieve Mr. Aubrey," she enquired, "in all affection that is not from rela-

tions?" She expressed herself awkwardly, because she was confused and trembling.

"Utterly," he answered loudly. "I believe no man nor woman either, ever experienced a pure, lasting, unselfish affection for another human being not related to them by ties of blood. *Passion* is a mere mad, selfish dream of vanity and folly, even of that there is little to be found now in the world."

"But," urged Anne, "how many affectionate, loving husbands and devoted wives are to be found everywhere; is that all to count for nothing in your theory?"

"Tell me," he answered, bitterly, "how long it is before the loving husband or devoted wife usually takes comfort, and another partner (if opportunity offers), when the other has been removed by death? I never heard or knew of the grief of either outlasting the twelvemonth. It is more convenient and pleasant to live with a wife or husband on amiable, gentle terms, than to be continually at loggerheads, and

when I bring a new Mrs. Aubrey home, I shall take care to select one of a gentle, yielding nature, so that we may jog along peacefully and pass among our neighbours for one of your loving couples, Miss Cave."

"If you are so cold and unloving, Mr. Aubrey, it is unfair to judge everybody's feelings by your own."

"Well," he replied, "perhaps I misjudge you; you will no doubt entertain a very sincere admiration and affection for the young gentleman whom you will some day marry."

Though he spoke banteringly, he unconsciously touched her to the quick, and she sighed heavily.

Robert laughed.

"Well, you have given one gentle sigh to his anticipated advent," he said. "Yes, Miss Cave, I fear I misjudged you. You will be very much in love, indeed."

"You scoff," she answered, a little haughtily, "at what you can never understand; but come, Elsie, we have sat here long

enough; they will be taking in candles and tea, and you had better bathe your eyes in our own room."

"Now I hope I have not offended you, Miss Cave," said Robert, rising and tendering her his hand; "you see I can't help bantering you a little, but it is not meant unkindly."

"No, no," she answered hastily. "I am not quite so foolish, Mr. Aubrey. I know, of course, you are only joking."

So she accompanied Elsie to their own room, and a short time after they were all seated round the tea table, for when they were without visitors, the Aubreys lived in an old-fashioned manner. Mrs. Aubrey was not present; indeed, she usually took all her meals in her own apartments, but the radiant Emily presided. She was full of joy, even to her slighted step-brother she was comparatively kind. Anne used often to think that, had Robert unbent himself a little from the chilling hauteur which always wrapped about him like a mantle when in the presence of his

sister, that she might have even learned to love him. True, her ideas had been warped respecting him from his very childhood, by the strange and incomprehensible step-mother; true, she mistook all his motives, and misjudged all his actions; but still had he chosen to undeceive her, to speak to her as he spoke to Anne, and to show himself an affectionate brother, she did not doubt of the result; as it was the truth must be told, that a colder, more ungracious brother was never seen.

"I am going to London, Miss Cave," said Emily, "the week after next, on a visit to Sir John Courtenay, and I expect we shall accompany his family to Scotland this autumn, so it will be a long time before you see me again at Yanly Manor."

"I have not the slightest doubt," remarked Robert, "that your efforts will be crowned with success, and that before the next winter there will be only one Miss Aubrey;" and he patted Elsie's head; he said it in a rude,

disagreeable, unkind manner. But Emily answered haughtily.

“Efforts, did you say, Robert Aubrey? do you imagine that the daughters of Harvey Aubrey will be compelled to make efforts to obtain husbands, for of course your covert sneer contained that meaning.”

“Did it?” he replied, carelessly, “what a pity.”

Anne felt very much annoyed with Robert; it appeared to her ungenerous and unmanly to condescend to annoy his sister in this manner, but his nature seemed turned to gall and bitterness when in her presence or his step-mother's. She glanced at the exceeding beauty and hauteur of the matchless Emily, and the bare thought of her condescending to plot or scheme for any husband, prince, duke, or lord, seemed too absurd; but she did not know the world then. That evening she played some of Beethoven's symphonies on the piano, and Emily accompanied her on the harp. Elsie crouched on the ground by her

side, with her face buried in the folds of her dress. Robert sat at the far end of the room. They had lights only at the side of the music, so that though where she sat he was facing her, yet she could only discern the dim outline of his form. How vividly the scene came before her afterwards, that night of years long past; where were the bright young forms that she remembered so well. One had met a fate more cruel than death itself. Another, in the language of the exiled Canaanites, "was not;" and for herself, where and what was she? But it is useless to anticipate. She thought, as she sat playing, and while she seemed to pour forth her feelings in the sweet melodies of the old master, that Robert Aubrey must have been sadly misjudged by those who called him dissipated and drunken. He read half the night through, he was very abstemious at table, mixing water often with his wine, which custom he had of course learned abroad. How then could Mrs. Aubrey call him a drunkard? Anne felt sure



he was fearfully wronged. She was now at the end of the second symphony, and she felt she could have played all night if it gave pleasure to the quiet listener at the dark end of the room, when the sudden entrance of Christine, with a request that Miss Cave would go to Mrs. Aubrey, startled her away from her calm enjoyment, and filled her with a fear of she knew not what. She has never given her own impressions of this person to the reader.

She was perhaps a year or two younger than Mrs. Aubrey, thin, and with immense dark eyes, her other features small and insignificant, and her cheeks sunk and rather withered. Her entire expression was a species of fierce cunning, but her manners were amiable, and, servant as she was, her taste in dress perfect. Anne could never understand whether the ties that bound her to Mrs. Aubrey were a kind of affection or merely interested motives. She has since con-

cluded that it was a mixture of both. The woman had really a sort of love for her mistress, but that she was inordinately greedy of gain is also a fact.

## CHAPTER VI.

ANNE found Mrs. Aubrey wrapped in her usual crimson dressing gown, her hair arranged for the night, and with an expression of bland yet fearful courtesy upon her lip that really made her glance uneasily towards the door, for Christine had withdrawn.

She had the wax candles burning on her dressing table ; one of them she took off, and approached the governess close, so as to throw the light full on her face and figure.

She looked at her steadily, then replaced her candle and sunk into a soft cushioned seat by the fire.

She motioned her with her hand to take a chair likewise, and she said in a short, dry tone :

“Sit down.”

These were the first words she had spoken.

Anne waited in breathless anxiety for her to begin, but she appeared to enjoy her uneasiness.

"I took the candle close to you, just now," she said at length, "that I might form an unbiassed opinion of your personal charms, which I have not noticed before."

"Mrs. Aubrey!" said the girl, indignantly.

She stopped her at once.

"Hush! Don't be angry, I am a strange woman, but it is my way to proceed at once to the point, which I told you before. I see before me a young girl of nineteen, with a charming figure, a fair skin, a glow which excitement or the warmth of the room has called into her cheeks usually pale. I see that this young girl has bright brown hair, large brown eyes, that she is dressed becomingly in a rose-coloured evening robe, and then I remember that my step-son is a libertine, and that he has been seated with this girl for a long time, and that their conversa-

tion has been about love and marriage, and I begin to fear that this girl is not as innocent as she is fair, or that she will not continue so long."

"Mrs. Aubrey wrongs me, wrongs me very, very cruelly," cried the governess. "Elsie, who was in the room all the while, knows what was the tenor of our conversation, or whether Mr. Robert Aubrey breathed one word of love to me."

"I scarcely think Elsie old enough to be a judge of such a conversation, Miss Cave," said Mrs. Aubrey, severely, "but I did not understand that she was present."

"Because your informant could not see ; the room was too dark, and if Elsie did not happen to speak during the time this listener remained, she would not, of course, be aware of her presence, but that she was there I can prove. Pray, let her be called at once?" and Anne sprang towards the bell.

"No, no, no," said Mrs. Aubrey. "I do not for one moment doubt your word, Miss

Cave, and it would never do to subject you to any reproof, however gentle, in the presence of your pupil. The way you proceed with her is highly satisfactory to me. I do not now feel half as much ashamed of her as I did a little time since, although, of course, she can never be anything like her sister."

"She is a dear, affectionate child," said Anne, doggedly.

"She has indeed a vast show of affection ready at all times," said the mother, "she is naturally a passionate, demonstrative, vulgar child. I wish, indeed, Miss Cave, that you would try and check this propensity a little more in her. Still, since she has had her new dresses, I must say she always looks clean and neat, and she does not bang the doors as she used to do."

Mrs. Aubrey paused, and Anne waited some time for her to speak again; at length she said :

"Is it true, Miss Cave, that Robert has been in the habit, during these last few days,

of joining you and Elsie, and reading Scott and Byron aloud to you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Aubrey, that is quite true; there your informant has not erred."

"You are marvellously self-possessed, Miss Cave. You own to an incipient flirtation with my step-son."

"I do not, Mrs. Aubrey. A flirtation is a kind of love-making, is it not? A mockery perhaps, but a little like it. Now to me Mr. Robert Aubrey has been uniformly kind and polite, but always cold and utterly unlover-like."

"That does not appear to please you," said the lady, in a manner which she meant to be pleasant and coaxing, but which Anne felt to be insulting.

She knew the tell-tale blood was mantling in her cheeks and temples, and that those blue, cruel eyes were fastened on her. Mrs. Aubrey continued:

"You do not feel pleased at this unlover-like demeanour, or I am mistaken. Either

ambition sways you, or what is worse—love. Either you have begun to speculate about being the next Mrs. Aubrey, or the chesnut curls and false fair face of Robert have made you forget your dignity ; which of these is the truth, Miss Cave? I am deeper read in human nature than my present secluded life would lead you to think, and I know you are swayed by one or the other of these two motives.”

“You are cruel, Madam,” said Anne, “most cruel and unjust.”

She stopped her.

“Cruel, perhaps,” she said, “but not unjust. Miss Cave, I have a right to stop any ambitious schemer whom I find attempting to entrap the present heir of Yanly Manor, and I will do it, so help me God, while I have breath left in this feeble and suffering body.” Her voice had a pathos in it which cut Anne to the heart. She glanced at the gaunt, worn woman. She thought of the woes and stormy passions which might have swept over her



life like a hurricane, leaving her the mere wreck of the once fair Catherine Sidney. She saw the spirit still unflinching, while the flesh was indeed weak and suffering. The dry cough, the hollow cheek, the wasted form, all told their tale. Pity for her, pity for Robert, pity for herself, all came upon her at once. She turned her head aside and she wept.

"You weep," she said, "you have a good heart."

Her voice was more gentle than the governess had ever heard it before.

"Will you tell me, as a friend," she asked, "which of these motives sways you? If it be ambition, I would say—Oh, young girl, sell not yourself for gold or rank. You know not what it is to wear diamonds upon a brow that throbs with fevered anxiety, to smile false smiles, while the heart is bursting, to sigh in secret for one word from a loved lip, one grasp from a loved hand, when such word, such grasp, would be sin because you—Oh, do not marry for ambition."

She seemed carried away by her excitement.

Anne could not believe that the calm Mrs. Aubrey was before her. What had so marvellously touched her, and caused her to speak thus? The tears of the governess? Scarcely so, then was it all a part—an acted part? She could not tell. Anne knew she wished her daughter to marry for ambitious motives. Yes, it must have been consummate acting.

“You need not fear, Mrs. Aubrey. I would never marry for gold or gain.” She seemed calmed, frozen again into the cold Mrs. Aubrey.

“Then you really love my step-son Robert? Do you know what you love? Do you know that he has seduced an innocent and beautiful girl, the daughter of one of our tenants; this is under my own eyes, and I know not how much more misery he has wrought away from home; but I hear that the evil he has done is great. Do you know that he is the soul of

deceit and fraud, without honour, without heart, without shame?"

"Oh, Mrs. Aubrey, do not speak so," cried Anne, "of your husband's own son. You are unjust to Robert." She spoke passionately and excitedly.

Mrs. Aubrey looked at her, then spoke:

"Believe me, I should never have hated Robert as a man, had he not made me blush for his vices. Miss Cave, I swear to you, upon my honour, as a lady, and a wife, and a mother, that Robert has been and is a seducer, a gambler, a deceiver. Will you be warned by me? Answer me."

"Mrs. Aubrey, you forget that I have not known Mr. Robert yet a month, that he has never paid me more than friendly attention, and that all these warnings and accusations are therefore quite thrown away upon me."

"You are inclined to be pert, young person, and pertness does not sit well on the young," said Mrs. Aubrey; "besides, I know that you love Robert Aubrey, or are beginning to do

so. I read it just now in the look that kindled in your eyes, when you said I was unjust to my step-son; I read enough to convince me, even had I not heard the burning words, the passionate tone in which you spoke. You were off your guard, Miss Cave; you called him Robert, not Mr. Robert Aubrey. You let me see into your heart, and I know you love him; tell me no falsehood; you cannot deceive me, besides your nature is truthful, you cannot blind or attempt to deceive others without pain to yourself. Be silent therefore; I have divined your secret."

"Then let me leave Yanly Manor," returned the girl, striving to speak calmly. "Let me leave Yanly Manor, as I am thus judged and accused."

Mrs. Aubrey leaned her brow on her hand and thought for a few moments, then she lifted her face towards Anne's and said:

"You would not easily obtain another situation, Miss Cave, if you left this one so abruptly, and besides, you manage Elsie well.


You are honest-hearted and honourable. If you left me, I might chance to engage a person who was neither one nor the other, who might entrap Robert more completely than you can do, for, as yet, the admiration seems all on your side."

Oh, how this woman's words cut to the girl's very soul. Did she know it, and did she take a pleasure in wounding, or was she like the surgeon, who probes the wound, not thinking of the pain he inflicts?

Anne answered her:

"What do you advise, Mrs. Aubrey. Shall I request Mr. Robert never to speak to me at all during his stay at home?"

"No!" and she shook her head. "He would then take more interest in you than ever; he would want to find out why, and when he had discovered that I had warned you of him, to annoy me, if for no other reason, he would take to you at once, and you—Oh, you could not resist him, then, if he once spoke to you, though you knew his words were false,



and whispered in the ears of every fair girl he met. No! if you wish me to be your friend, as I promised to be, and as I will be, you must act with me, and having pledged me your word that you will do this, I will trust you, Miss Cave. I will trust you. There is that in your honest eyes that would make me trust you. Nay, do not look so scornful, I am not flattering; but tell me, will you act with me, and for me? If not, leave Yanly Manor." She spoke firmly. You felt with that woman that you must succumb and yield.

Anne could not resist; she had no wish to leave Yanly Manor; it was already dangerously dear to her, and throughout the whole interview Mrs. Aubrey had not once lost her temper or self-command, while Anne had been carried away by her feelings, worked upon by Mrs. Aubrey's acting, made to lay bare her heart to her scrutiny. Anne answered her;

"If I can please you, Madam, I will; that is, if I am to do wrong to no person."

She laughed. "Don't fear; if I wanted to choose an agent for evil, I should not choose you. All I will enforce is this; avoid Robert without letting him see you are doing so; be perfectly kind and polite to him, but eschew all *tête-à-tête*, for even with Elsie's presence it is still a *tête-à-tête*. School yourself to remember the true dissipation of his character, and that if even he professed love to you, it would lead to much evil. Believe me, a woman can do everything herself, if she is resolved to crush an incipient attachment in the bud; be watchful, be wary, be determined—you know my words are but as the answering echoes of your own desires. I have read your mind and heart, during this short interview, as though it were a fair and legible page spread before me, and I see that you have lately been saying these very words to yourself. You have been resolving to snap the cord that holds you prisoner to a pleasant, but dangerous fascination. You have been repeating to yourself, that the heir of

Yanly Manor was too far above you, for you to think of winning his *honourable* love, and for any other you would spurn it, would you not? And yet, you have been hurt at his coldness, instead of being pleased at it. You have listened for his footsteps, and his voice, and you have sat in his presence spell-bound, always determining that to-morrow should find you acting differently. Now, am I not a sorceress, have I not told you the truth?"

She had, or nearly so. She must have read confirmation of her words, in the changes that swept over Anne Cave—she had gathered together a few facts, which startled her greatly, but in one point she had jumped too hastily to a conclusion. Anne had never despaired of so winning Robert Aubrey's *honourable* love, because she had never entertained the dim possibility of winning his love at all—she had been quite satisfied with the calm, brotherly intercourse that subsisted between them; and though she had been aware that her interest in him was growing a little too



deep, and she had resolved to check it herself, ere it was too late—she had never *known* that she had felt hurt at his coldness, until Mrs. Aubrey first showed her her *own* heart, in those few cutting words, at the beginning of their conversation. She *knew* it *now*, and the good sense contained in her advice came upon her with strong and stern conviction. Yes, she would conquer this feeling, more for her own sake than for that of the artful and strange woman before her.

“Have I not told you the truth?”

“Partly, Mrs. Aubrey, but it is strange, very strange that you should set it down that I am in love with your step-son, when no word of love has passed between us; and this I will say, that I am as innocent of all design or even desire to entrap the heir of this demesne, as any child of three years’ old.”

“I believe you, it is not the heir, it is Robert Aubrey you thought of—nay, wince not; you are a good girl, tell me now, is it a

contract with your promise to avoid Robert? promise me faithfully and truly — your hand."

It was the first time Anne's hand had ever clasped that of the haughty lady of the manor, and now her delicate yet clammy fingers fastened round those of the governess, and gave her a strange sensation, as though a knot of snakes had writhed themselves, and twined themselves about her hand—she did not shrink, nor shudder—she stood calm and impassable. Mrs. Aubrey went to her private closet, and returned with a bank note for twenty pounds; "there is your half year's salary in advance," she said, laying it on the table before her. "You look as scared as though I had offered you the price of blood." The governess started at the word, and trembled violently, the lady spoke in such a hollow voice.

"You are far too generous, far too kind," Anne stammered; "something might happen, so that I might not stop here six months."

“Well, in any case, that note is yours. I wish it—do you understand? and now good night. I am weary, send Christine to me.”

Anne bowed and withdrew.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SPRING TIME AT YANLY.

ANNE kept her promise and avoided Robert Aubrey as much as his step-mother could have desired. Whether he noticed it did not appear; probably he did, and having attributed the change to his step-mother's influence, resolved to let the matter rest. To analyse the feelings of the governess during this time is a task beyond the power of the writer. A patient dependent, accustomed from the cradle to crush all rebellious emotion, all struggling desires, all daring aspirations, and to wipe out with the sponge of reason all those bright colours that hope, fancy, youth, nay, perhaps love, have dared to paint upon the sombre map of a cheerless and

empty existence; a patient dependent, who has been accustomed to this eternal repression from the cradle, would scarcely have given the reins to her own thoughts, and would hardly have admitted the heir of Yanly into her dreams.

The months of February and March rolled by, the time of frosts, and cutting winds, and dismal skies was over, and Spring, clothed in fairy green, wreathed with white blossoms, and arched over with sapphire skies, Spring woke up in the north country and transformed the mountains, woods, and plains into a glowing poem, and with the winter Robert bid farewell to Yanly for a season—not to go to Italy, but to visit some friends in London. His adieu to Anne was cool and kind, just what would have pleased the step-mother. Emily also went away on her visit; and now the household settled into a dull routine; they saw no company. They never did, so the soft-spoken Emma informed Miss Cave, unless Mr. George was at home;

then, indeed, the whole house was turned topsy turvey, and missus went to all expense to entertain him and such friends as he brought with him. Between Anne and the dried old lawyer squire a regular friendship was struck up. It was because Elsie, his favourite child, was so fond of the governess, that he patronised her.

Something had been said in a conversation between Mrs. Aubrey and Anne Cave, which we must tell the reader. It was in allusion to a certain Nelly Stokes, who had travelled in the mail with the governess when first she came to Yanly. This person, finding that the girl was going to Yanly Manor had grown very communicative, and had volunteered certain scraps of information about the family at Yanly which we will insert here for the information of the reader.

Harvey Aubrey, though a lawyer, was of a good old Cumberland family. His grandfather having squandered his estates, John Aubrey, the eldest son, entered into trading

speculations, by means of which he realized a large fortune. Harvey was his son, and being without ambitious views, he had embraced the law as his profession, and had set up in partnership with a very old firm in the county town of Felton.

It was now that the estate of the Haughtons had begun to get entangled in the web of the lawyers ; and while Harvey was yet a young man, the mortgages were foreclosed, and the attorneys stood in full possession of the property. Afterwards Harvey bought the shares his partners held on the Yanly lands, and then he married Maude Haughton, with whom he lived so unhappily that a separation was the consequence. After her death came the courtship of the present lady of the manor, a very beautiful woman, portionless, nameless, being only the daughter of an obscure surgeon at Carlisle, but highly accomplished, having been educated wholly abroad—clever, scheming, and fascinating. Harvey had really loved her with something

like passion, and for a few years he had been happy, until one day a letter was suddenly brought to her while in the presence of her husband. After glancing over it, the wife had lost consciousness, and fallen into a fit on the ground. The letter clutched between her stiffened fingers had been read afterwards by the husband. From that day Harvey Aubrey had become a changed man; he had shrunk and hardened by the time a few years had passed, into a miserly lawyer, with no interest beyond his money bags. He was now the sole representative of the firm of lawyers in which he had first been junior partner.

But what had the lawyer squire read in the folded sheet of paper? He had read that his wife had never loved him, that her heart and affections were given to an Austrian officer whom she had met abroad; that that officer had died upon the field of Austerlitz; and that that letter which had shaken in the nervous fingers of the husband, had been penned on the eve of the day of battle, by



the lover, and entrusted by him to a friend who promised to post it in case the count should fall. He had fallen—so the friend stated in a postscript. This sudden news had thrown Mrs. Aubrey into a fit. But there was nothing in this letter—written in French—to show that the lady had been unfaithful as a wife. And when Harvey Aubrey found his servants gossiping, and unpleasant rumours taking place in the neighbourhood, he caused the letter to be translated and read to the servants, and when it was thus ascertained, “according to the diction of the letter,” that the lady and the count had never met since her marriage, gossip ceased and rumour died out. This had been the substance of the story which Nelly Stokes, who had been wet-nurse to the three elder Aubreys, had related to Anne Cave. So the romantic girl entertained a deep pity for the disappointed old squire, miser though he was.

Spring ripened into summer, rich flowers


blushed in the lanes and hedges, and even in the insufficiently tended gardens of Yanly Manor, green leaves waved, fruits hung ripening on the boughs, yellowing corn began to rustle in the fields, and then the gorgeous mantle of August was flung over the country side, and one day, suddenly, and without notice, Robert came home to Yanly. Anne heard his step and voice for a whole day about the house, in the large stone hall, on the stairs, and in the galleries, but as yet she had not seen him. Emily had been at home two months, so the household seemed likely to be a little more cheerful. That night Anne scarcely slept. The next morning, she arose with the full intention of conquering her feelings with regard to Robert, she felt quite brave and strong, and, nerved with the utmost determination. All went smoothly. She saw nothing of him during her early walk 'with Elsie; and after breakfast, at which he did not appear, they went into the school-room for three hours. Once liberated,

Elsie wished Anne to join her in a walk in the park so, to meet Robert. Anne had her answer ready.

“You go, Elsie, but I have letters to write” (this was true), “which will keep me engaged all the morning.”

In fact, she had to write to her mother and brother, and she had of course much to tell of the kindness and liberality she had experienced at Yanly Manor, and of the expected visit to the continent, which was now freely discussed among the Aubreys daily, so she kept her room until it was time to dress for dinner; but when Elsie came in, and flinging her hat on the ground, cried pettishly, “Robert has been quite cross because you were not out to-day; he said he quite missed you,” we will not deny that Anne became sensible of a strange thrill of pleasure, such as she had never—no, never, experienced before, because she had never heard of Robert enquiring for her before. In obedience to her promise, she however acted properly and wisely. She told

Elsie how much engaged she had been in writing long letters, as though that had been the sole cause of her absence, and when they were dressed she descended calmly with her pupil to the dining room. Mrs. Aubrey did not appear, and Anne sat down to the table with little appetite and less spirit, glancing furtively towards the door. Yes, Robert came in, looking a little pale and quiet, she thought. He shook hands with her and took his place opposite, by the side of Emily; they spoke little during the meal, and soon after the dessert was laid on the table Anne took occasion to steal out into the gardens, through the French window, for she had a sad headache, and she thought the air might relieve it. Elsie came hopping after her. The flower garden was very beautiful, though not as well kept in order as it might have been, but Elsie's friend, John, the stable boy, was almost the only gardener who regularly attended to the grounds; the lawns and flower beds were notwithstanding very pleasant, and



Anne paused by the side of a rose bush, covered with white blossoms to inhale their fragrance, while Elsie ran hither and thither full of life and spirits. Presently she came up to her, breathless with running, and struggling for utterance. When Anne could make out her meaning, she learnt that John, who was employed at another part of the garden, was about to give her a bouquet of the best flowers, at Elsie's request, and she begged her governess to accompany her to the greenhouse; she went gladly, and as they crossed the side gravel paths she said—

“I was thinking, Miss Cave, that John, and Cook and Emma, our housemaid, would begin to think I was growing proud because I don't ever go and romp with them now, and I've been explaining to John—” She hesitated, Anne helped her out. “That it was the governess's fault not yours, eh, Elsie? And John, I suppose, thinks none the better of me for it.”

“No, no, no, Miss Cave, dear; do you

think I would go and throw the blame on you like that?" said Elsie, artlessly. "No, I have been telling him that I was getting to talk like the country people, from being so much with them, and that, as I am growing a great girl, it was time for me to leave off romping in the kitchen, but that I was as fond and fonder of him, and Cook, and Emma than ever."

The good-heartedness of this child endeared her more to Anne every day. She drew her hand within hers, and she said—

"That's right, Elsie, always contrive to consider the feelings of servants, and those beneath you, as tenderly as though they were in your own rank; and now tell me what did your friend John say in answer?"

"Oh, he said that it was quite right, and that you were a very nice young lady, for his mother had told him so."

"His mother?"


"Yes, his mother is Nelly Stokes, at the lodge gates; she came in the coach with you,

she had been sending her second son off to sea when you met her." They were now close to John Stokes, whose back was towards them; he turned when he heard their steps, and touched his cap respectfully. John was a fine specimen of the English peasant, tall, and stalwart, with a rosy, honest, sun-burnt face; he was about twenty two.

"I did not know, John," said the governess "that Nelly was your mother whom I travelled with. How is she? I have not seen her for this month."

"She's well, Miss, thank you," he answered; "she would be pleased if you would step into the lodge and speak with her?"

"I will," answered Anne, following him into the greenhouse, and now, in a few moments, she was possessed of a bouquet, which would have sold, I suppose, for half a guinea in Covent Garden Market. There was no head gardener nor anybody to say him nay at Yanly Manor, and perhaps it was John's passionate love of horticulture which



led him to devote all his spare time to the gardens, for which he received only a groom's wages, and his unflinching honesty prevented him from reaping the slightest benefit, in a pecuniary sense, from the fruits and flowers he so carefully tended. All, however, were not so scrupulous, and on one occasion Mr. Harvey Aubrey detected a man, who was employed on and off about the grounds, appropriating a fine basket of apples and pears to his own use, doubtless with the intention of trying what price they would fetch at the Felton Market. John, however, enjoyed his unlimited confidence, and well did he deserve it. The dew beginning to fall, Anne called Elsie to return to the house, and thanking John she hastened in. She found Emily already posted at her harp, and she was requested to play over again the symphonies of last night. She did so; but her fingers faltered on the keys, for her head still ached, and at last she was obliged to turn and excuse herself from continuing:



"My head aches so, Miss Aubrey."

Emily, with all the winning grace that was hers so completely, apologised for not having perceived the illness of Miss Cave herself—she asked her to have a cup of strong tea immediately, and Anne soon found herself greatly relieved. But when Robert entered, Elsie informed him that Miss Cave was ill, and he, in his kind calm way, expressed his sympathy, and prescribed a holiday on the next day, as the best thing in the world for her; and added that he would accompany Elsie and her governess for a long ride into the country.

She felt her heart beat with a tumultuous throbbing mingled with pain—why? Because, if his feeling towards her had partaken in the least degree of the sentiment his step-mother had dreaded, he could never so firmly and with such indifference have proposed a whole day's excursion with her into the country, in the presence of his sisters, and this indifference pained her. Yes, do what she

would, reason, plan, think as she might, this indifference pained her.

Emily raised her eyebrows slightly, and said :

“ We must talk to mamma about it.”

Robert’s lip curled ; he turned to Elsie.

“ What do you say, little one ? Should you like a holiday to-morrow ?”

“ Yes—I should like to go to Mrs. Forster’s farm, to the Cherry-woods, and have new milk from the cow, and come home in the evening quite late. Yes—yes—let’s go, Miss Cave—let’s go ?”

“ Not so loud, Elsie,” said Anne, in an undertone.

“ You know, Elsie,” said Emily, “ that papa has a new tenant now at the Cherry-woods ; Mrs. Forster has been gone some months, and perhaps the new family, who come from Kent, and are quite strangers here, may not like your sudden inroads as much as your friend Mrs. Forster did.”

“ I forgot,” said Elsie, meekly.

"All right," cried Robert, hastily. "I know the present family will be glad to let us taste their home-made brown bread and new milk. Come, Miss Cave—say you will go. You shall have my brown mare, Bess; Elsie has her pony, and I will borrow another horse. Come—you know you told me you were a fearless rider—it's only seven miles to the Cherry-woods."

What a delightful ride it would have been through that sublime mountain scenery, and with that pleasant society; it was like holding a cup of water to a thirsty soul, and crying, drink! drink! when the cup was poisoned, and the sufferer knew it, and was fain to turn away his head, and refused what he most longed for.

Anne said—"Of course, Mr. Robert, I must consult Mrs. Aubrey before I can give Elsie a holiday, and a day in the country."

Anne must have spoken in a disagreeable tone, pert perhaps, for he coloured slightly,

bowed, and said nothing, and there it would most likely have ended, but that Elsie having once imbibed the idea of a ride to the Cherry-woods farm refused to be pacified, and flew off to her father to torment him about the expedition, and the sum total of it was—that Anne was called again into the council chamber of Mrs. Aubrey, whom she found beaming with smiles and good nature.

“Take a chair, Miss Cave. You look pale—a headache? Ah, I know only too well what a headache is. So Elsie has been worrying you for a ride to the Cherry-woods; she has been accustomed to go there once or twice every summer to take tea with Mrs. Forster; but we have new tenants there now, at the same time I have no doubt they will be glad to see you. But what is this I hear about Robert’s offer to escort you? This must not be.” And she looked Anne through and through with the blue glittering eyes.

"I think the best plan would be for Elsie to accompany Mr. Robert Aubrey, and for me to remain at home."

"You do?" she asked, still with a bland smile, "well, I do not. I have every objection to Robert's visiting the Cherry-woods. They have a lovely daughter there, Miss Cave, whose acquaintance he has made in London, and whom I have every reason to believe he has ruined. He does not think that I know this, but his unblushing insolence in asking you to accompany him in a visit to this fair but frail Amy Eastdom surprises me a little. Doubtless he has paid her many a private visit, but I think if he presented himself openly there, and Farmer Eastdom knew him, that he would shoot him like a dog."

Her voice was strangely calm as she said these words, but, oh, the jealous throes that vibrated through Anne's frame at the bare mention of the fair Amy Eastdom, the waking into the life of love in all its fierce power and might. She had never thought before of a

rival. She had had no idea that the mention of one could have tormented her thus. She had yet to experience the truth that jealousy is cruel as the grave. A lovely daughter before whose beauty her pale face would fade into obscurity, a fair, frail Amy (what a sweet name), whom he doubtless loved for all his exclamations that there was no such thing on earth; and he had paid her private visits—yes, and doubtless some day he would make her his wife, for he was not the heartless reprobate his step-mother represented. Of that Anne felt convinced, but it was unblushing insolence on his part to invite her to pay a visit to this girl in his company. His step-mother said rightly. Then she turned fiercely towards her, exclaiming :

“Of course, Mrs. Aubrey, you will never think of letting Elsie go to this place.”

“Why not?” she asked. “the girl’s parents are respectable, broken-hearted people, who wrote and confided the whole matter to me before leaving Kent, and taking this

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farm. It is not their intention to keep Amy at home, after once she is confined, for they have discovered her unfortunate condition. She is to be sent to America, to an uncle there, and then Robert will lose his lady-love. The girl is willing to go, for she is overwhelmed with shame at the consequences of her sin. You must understand that old Mr. Eastdom had taken this farm on a long lease, twelve months ago, and in the meanwhile Robert has managed to get acquainted with this poor girl whilst she was on a visit in London, telling her he was the heir of her father's future landlord. When he had effected his purpose, he became indifferent, and then, when too late, she made confidants of her wretched parents, who wrote to me from their farm in Kent, telling me the whole tale. I have since heard other particulars from another quarter. The poor old man did not want to take Cherrywood at all after what had happened, although it is the best farm in the county, but I told him to keep to his en-

gagement and to send his daughter away, and I promised that no breath of what had happened should ever escape my lips. The old people have never seen Robert, so I suppose he trusts to that when he asks you to accompany him to their house. Now what do you think of Robert Aubrey?"

"I think he must be a very wicked, heartless young man," Anne answered wrathfully, "but what do you think had better be done about Elsie, Madam?"

"I think," she answered, "that you had better go, both of you, and take tea there, and a kind note from me to Mrs. Eastdom. Williams, the coachman, shall ride after you, then you will see this poor thing, perhaps, and will be able to judge of her beauty."

Need we say that Anne felt most anxious to look upon the fair face of her rival, and that she consented to go on the next afternoon to Cherrywoods? She saw nothing again of Robert that evening, for when she returned to the drawing-room he had quitted it for the



night. She was disappointed, she wanted to show him how chillingly cold she had become towards him. She wished him to expostulate with her on her changed conduct, and then to answer him with frozen politeness, and almost insolent reserve, but she had no opportunity of displaying before him that evening. She passed another sleepless night, and arose, of course, with a worse headache than ever, but she gave Elsie no holiday, and she went into school determined not to let her flesh conquer her spirit. She felt ill, but she set Elsie exercises, and sat over her music, and when the time of liberation came she sat down resolutely to sew. Of course nobody troubled themselves about her but Elsie. To Emily she was most completely indifferent; she might have died before her eyes, and scarcely, if she had not complained, would that young lady have perceived it. She was essentially cold-hearted and haughty ; hers was the perfection of good breeding, which

looks at first to the uninitiated like real kindness, but Anne felt that if she remained with the Aubreys a whole lifetime, the distance would never have been shortened between them. Proud, passionless, peerless creature, yet never had Anne the least wish to be intimate or friendly with her. She was kind to her in her way, never annoying nor interfering with her, always polite, and graceful, and good-natured; she was Robert's sister, and Anne liked her accordingly; but there she sat in the school room, on that fair August morning, her work in her hand, and her head swimming, her heart bursting, Elsie refusing to leave her.

"You look ill, Miss Cave dear. Miss Cave, let me go and bring you Emily's vinaigrette—put away your work," and off she started, the little loving soul. Scarcely had she left the room, when Robert entered it; he started when he saw Anne's pale face and heavy eyes; she bowed to him slightly, but he ap-

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proached her, and held out his hand; what could she do, but place hers in his? He clasped it kindly.

"You look quite ill, Miss Cave; you ought not to be up, I am sure your head is painful to you."


"Yes," she said, looking at him, "but Elsie is promised to go to Cherrywoods this afternoon, and I must not disappoint her."

"She tells me," he said smilingly, "that Mrs. Aubrey has forbidden my accompanying you; well, it can't be helped, I suppose."

"You will lose the sight of a great beauty," Anne said, looking at him with her heavy aching brown eyes. "I hear Mrs. Eastdom's daughter Amy is most lovely."

"Indeed," he answered, carelessly, while not a muscle of his fine countenance betrayed the least emotion, and his fearless blue eyes looked calmly into Anne's. "Indeed, I must go there some day with an excuse—I have never seen any of these new tenants at Cherrywoods."

Anne had it in her heart to tax him with his perfidy then and there, and to give him her opinion of his conduct; fortunately she restrained herself. How had her idol fallen; her truthful Robert; but perhaps it was not true, never mind. She would go to Cherrywoods that afternoon, ill as she was, and find out the truth for herself. She broke hastily away from Robert, with an apology, and rushed to her room; then closing the door she cast herself upon the bed, and wept sorely for some moments, then with still a bewildering headache she rose and bathed her pale face and forehead, and arranged her hair, for it had been decided that they were to start early after dinner; her riding skirt was soon on, and when Elsie came in, she assisted her on with hers, but a glance at her white face in the looking glass quite frightened her; still she was resolved to go, and look upon the face of this fair Amy Eastdom. Elsie was too full of pleasurable anticipation to notice her illness, and they were soon mounted and



away, with Williams, the fat coachman, in their rear. She remembered nothing of that ride—she seemed to have threaded through mazy woods, and then out into open mountain road, where the hot sun shone fiercely, and her brain seemed to whirl madly. When they reached Cherrywoods, which we will describe more particularly hereafter—she felt sick—sick unto death. She was lifted from her horse, by she knew not whom, and carried into the little cool summer parlour and she heard the voice of Elsie as though through a dream, with a wailing sound of sorrow—she saw a woman with a pale stern face, who bathed her temples and sat by her side, and even in that fevered state she looked wildly about for some form of ethereal beauty, her dreaded rival, the fair, frail Amy Eastdom. She did not see her, and then she remembered nothing until she found herself some days afterwards with many leeches on her temples, and a benevolent looking, sensible-faced old gentleman at her bedside, holding a watch

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in one hand, and feeling her pulse with the other. Of course he was a doctor, and she had been, nay, was very ill; but where was she, and what had been the matter with her? In answer to these questions, the good doctor told her not to exert herself—that she had had brain fever, caused by riding in the hot sun when she had too much mental excitement; he also said that she was at Mrs. Eastdom's, at Cherrywoods—that Elsie had gone home, much against her will—that Mrs. Aubrey had sent to inquire daily after her, and that she should see Elsie the next day if possible; he then refused to answer her any more questions, gave her some cooling drink, and recommended her to try and sleep; this she managed to do. For a few days, she lay in a weak, uncertain state. Elsie came in to see her once or twice, but was never allowed to stay long. After another few days, she began slowly to gather strength, appetite, and reason came back to her, and she saw more than once, in close attendance about her bed,

the pale, stern face of the woman she had noticed on her first arrival—she used to lie in bed, and take note of her old fashioned chamber, its polished oak floor, and diamond paned latticed window. There was a painting of the Virgin and Child at the foot of the bed. The Virgin with kind, pitying eyes, that somehow reminded her of Elsie. At last she was allowed to come out of bed to sit by the window, and gaze at the fair prospect of mountain slope, and sunny pasture, that stretched around Cherrywoods. She thanked the pale, stern-faced old woman, whom she found to be Mrs. Eastdom; and at last one day—this was when she had been down stairs, and was beginning to think of returning to Yanly Manor—she ventured to ask her if she had not a daughter. Oh, the fearful pallor that spread over that mother's face as she answered:

“I had one once.”

“She is not dead!” Anne exclaimed.

“Worse than dead,” answered Mrs. East-

dom, in a voice which long afterwards vibrated in the ears of the invalid—so full was it of savage grief—"she is worse than dead, she is ruined, defiled—she will soon be a mother, and she has never been a wife. Pray God, may she never leave her room alive! Pray God, I may soon see her in her coffin! But the mother's heart *would* speak in spite of the stern sense of wrong that weighed it down—this woman, so harsh, so terrible in her anguish, could yet weep tears of love and pity; her voice faltered and loud sobs shook her frame. Anne was still very weak, but she wished to leave the little sitting room to procure some water, but she stayed her with her firm hand laid on her shoulder.

"Do not mind me, young lady," she said. "I should not have spoken to you thus, but that during your delirium you have mentioned my daughter's name, as *frail* Amy Eastdom; this shews me you know her sad tale—Mrs. Aubrey has most probably con-



fided it to you, as a warning, for her vile step-son is now at home, and you have once or twice pronounced his name, whilst you lay sick upstairs. Nay, more, he has been here to inquire for you, riding here on a fine hunter, and having the insolence to ask after all my family, as though he had never done me wrong. Mr. Eastdom was out. I saw him, but I told him to leave my door, and never to darken it again. I told him more. I said that if his father died before our lease was out, we would leave the farm, before we would own him for a landlord, and he had the effrontery to put on an air of the greatest amaze, to protest he knew not what I was saying, and to attempt to induce me to state plainly what ground of complaint I had against him. I looked him full in the face and said, 'Sir, is not your name Robert Aubrey, and are you not the son of Mr. Harvey Aubrey?'

"He looked me back again more brazen than ever, and answered—

“‘Yes, Madam, and if you have any wrong to attach to my name, let me hear what it is.’

“‘Sir,’ I said, ‘doubtless you, in your dissipated aristocratic set, look on the wrong you have committed as a mere nothing—a cause for laughter and jeers; but be sure your sin will find you out sooner or later. You have a *mother’s curse*, remember that.’

“He grew deadly white as I said those words, and he laughed, yes laughed, as he answered—

“‘I defy that curse, I despise that curse, and I render it back a thousand-fold to her who taunts me with it.’

“He sprang into his saddle and rode off like one mad.”

Anne thought to herself that Robert must have mistaken Mrs. Eastdom’s manner; he must have thought she threatened him with the curse of his step-mother, and she attempted to explain it thus to her, but she would not listen to Anne.

The entrance of Mr. Eastdom, whom she had never yet seen, put a stop to the conver-

sation. He was a fine-looking man in the prime of life, but with snow white hair, blanched, as Anne afterwards learnt, by excess of sorrow at the shame of his only child. He was a very meek man, quite ruled by his strong minded wife; he had a heart which yearned still towards his poor Amy, but he had been brought to consent to send her away an exile from her native land, and also to the feasibility of keeping her always a close prisoner in her own chamber.

Anne thought of the one ewe lamb in the parable, and her heart bled for this bereaved couple. "Oh, Robert, can it indeed be possible that you have done this thing?" she asked herself.

While they sat at tea, the postman brought Anne two letters; one was from Robert, and ran thus—

"DEAR MISS CAVE,

"I should have ridden several times to have inquired after your health, but that

I met with such an extraordinary reception from your hostess, that I could never think of entering her presence again. She accused me of I really know not what. *Do* try and get from her, what harm she imagines I have done. She informed me in a melo-dramatic style that I should have my mother's *curse*, so I suppose Mrs. Aubrey has been again maligning me. I left Mrs Eastdom in a great passion, which I am sorry for, as perhaps, if I had stayed longer, I should have heard what my crime was. I trust you will soon return home. Elsie is disconsolate without you, and I hear you are down stairs every day. With kind regards,


“Yours sincerely.

“ROBERT AUBREY.”

“P.S.—Have you seen anything of the beautiful Miss Eastdom?”

Anne sat with the letter in her hand, perfectly overwhelmed with astonishment, so cool, so audacious; no, it must be a mistake

—Robert could not be the guilty man, who had brought this evil upon the family whose hospitality now sheltered her ; she could not come to any fixed determination, but she wished to question Amy. That night she could not sleep, and it was a fearful storm that was the cause of her wakefulness. The thunder rolled in awful peals, as though the last day had come, and the Judge of all the earth were seated upon his throne judging righteously. The old house shook to its very foundations, and flash after flash of forked lightning illumined her chamber. Never before had she witnessed a like storm ; the deafening thunder-claps, peal upon peal, each sounding louder and more terror-striking than its predecessor, would not suffer her to lie still ; she rose to seek human companionship and sympathy, and thrusting her feet into her slippers, and hastily wrapping a large cloak around her, she walked out into the long-winding passage that led from her room into a more inhabited part of the rambling



old house; she came suddenly upon a window that commanded a lovely stretch of corn and mountain land; the whole was positively rendered as visible as in the day time by the lurid light of the storm; she could distinguish even the town of Felton against the fiery sky; but whilst she gazed on a scene at once beautiful and terrific, a yet louder roll of thunder, which seemed to take away her breath, crashing, and splitting, and roaring over her very head, made her shrink shuddering on the ground; and then came a moment's silence, followed by a heavy fall of rain which almost beat in the casements, drip, drip, splash. Anne looked once more across the country, but it was now all wrapped in thick darkness, and she began to think of returning to her room, when there rose upon her ear another sound—it was the wail of a new-born babe, and it proceeded from a half-open door farther down the passage.

It was, then, the child—the child of

Robert—born on such a night, and in such a storm—poor helpless innocent!

She had no right to follow the sound, to run to the door, and push it open, and to walk straight up to the bed as she did, with an anxious, earnest face; we are certain, we say, that she had no right to act in this manner; but there was no person to call her to account; no stern, palefaced Mrs. Eastdom to say her nay. No, she saw a fire burning low in the grate, a candle with an unsnuffed wick, an old crone seated by the fire, with a child, whom she had been in the act of dressing on her knees; the nurse slept, as is the wont of nurses; the child wailed feebly, and the mother—oh, the lovely countenance of that childish mother—her auburn hair falling around her pale, beautiful little face; she seemed scarcely fifteen, and exhausted as she must have felt, by the great struggle she had just passed through, she uttered no complaint, but only gazed wistfully towards the fire-place, in the direction of her child. When she saw Anne she said:

"Oh, you are the young lady I have heard about. Are you frightened at the storm? I hope you are better."

"How are you?" Anne answered. "Do you not want something? I had better wake that nurse."

"If you would bring me my baby," she said, humbly; "he has not been born an hour."

"I ought to call your mother," Anne said.

"No, no," she pleaded; "nurse has been the only person with me, and I don't want mother to know anything yet; she will be so very angry."

"Angry!"

She blushed faintly. "Yes; you know all about it—how wicked I have been, and that I have broken my parents' hearts, but I did not know what I was doing, indeed I did not. My mother hates me now. I am to be sent away. Never mind, my baby won't hate me, wicked as I am."

"It is Robert Aubrey who is so wicked, and deserves to be hated," said Anne huskily.



"Ah," said Amy, "he was too bad; he took me to an office in London, and made me write my name, and he told me I was married to him, and I believed it. He took advantage of me because I was such a little fool."

"You do not love him now?" faltered Anne.

"How can I?" she answered simply, "when he is so wicked?"

Anne stood amazed. This simple, childish creature had been ruined without having even loved. Her whole thoughts, she afterwards found, seemed fixed on her parents, and her whole love on her babe.

Of course Anne awakened the nurse, and between them they lighted the fire which had burnt out. They made the childish mother some gruel, and they laid the tiny infant in her arms. It was almost daylight before Anne again sought her bed-chamber; more than ever puzzled at the apparently consistent villany of the seducer; and yet at her heart

struggled a vague misbelief. "What if some other villain had personated Robert Aubrey, to effect the ruin of Amy; and if so, did Mrs. Aubrey know of it?"

The next day she begged Mrs. Eastdom to permit her to visit Amy once more. Hardly was she seated, when she asked Amy if she had any letters from Robert Aubrey?

"Yes, several."

Anne asked to see one—anyone she liked.

She gave her the key of her desk which lay on the chest of drawers. Anne took out a letter.

Yes, yes—it was the fac-simile of Robert's peculiar writing, the words were full of burning affection, and entreaty that she would meet him in Hyde Park on the following day, in the evening. It was signed in full—

"Yours truly, till death,

"ROBERT AUBREY."

It was dated a twelvemonth back. Anne drew from her pocket her own letter received from him the day before. Yes, the writing

was the same, the very same; one thought more struck her—

“Have you a likeness of him, Amy?”

Yes, under the tray of her desk, set in a locket of gold. With trembling fingers Anne drew it forth; there indeed was Robert’s face, beautiful and noble, but with a sweet hopefulness upon it, which sat not there now. It was the face of a youth at fair eighteen—a smooth boyish face, resembling, and yet totally unlike, the Robert of to-day. “But this is Robert, very young,” Anne said, “this must have been taken eight or nine years ago.”

“Yes,” she answered, “it is not much like him.”

“Yes,” Anne said, “it is very like him.”

“Do you think so?” she asked.

“I am positive. The expression is rather different, but the soul that looks out of the eyes of this portrait, and through the eyes of Robert in the flesh, is one and the same. I mean that the artist must have faithfully copied the countenance of Mr. Robert Au-

brey. I am confident this was his face at eighteen."

And Anne took it up, looked earnestly into the eyes of the portrait, and could have sighed, but she restrained herself.

"Amy, would you object to tell me how you first became acquainted with Mr. Aubrey?"

"Oh, I went to visit some people called Fisher, in London; the girl Hannah had been a schoolfellow of mine, and she persuaded me to go to the Theatre with her one night without any older person. Her father had promised to take us, but he was not able to come in time, so we took a coach and went."

"Yes."

"And getting up the stairs there was such a crush, we were nearly knocked down, and then a young gentleman came up and helped us, and afterwards he came into our box—that was Robert Aubrey."

"Then, Amy, how did he begin? what did he say?"


"Oh, bless you, he pretended to fall in love with me at once, but begged me to say nothing about it, and I used to meet him in the Park with Hannah, often."

"Did you love him?"

"Well, you see," said Amy, rocking her baby to and fro, and opening her large eyes, "he was so kind to me, he gave me such nice presents, and then one day, when I told him that my father was going to leave our farm in Kent, and coming up north to Westmoreland, to take another farm from a Squire Aubrey, he started and coloured, and then said—'My little darling, I am the eldest son of your landlord; my name is Robert Aubrey, and won't your father be pleased to find what a good match you have made?' but still he wouldn't let me say anything about it afterwards. He used to write to me in his own name, and at last I consented to marry him, but he made me keep all quiet and secret. No person knew anything but Hannah Fisher, so I went to an office which he said was a

registry office where I wrote my name in a book, and he wrote his. I really thought I was married, and according to his advice I told the Fishers that I must go home, but Hannah knew all then. I left in a cab as they thought for the coach office, but in reality to his lodgings in St. James's Street; there I lived with him some time, seeing nobody and feeling very miserable and uneasy about my parents, to whom he would not suffer me to write. At last I noticed a change in him, all his love seemed gone, he grew cold and neglectful, and then when I complained he became rude and even brutal. However, one terrible night he told me he was not my husband, that he had deceived me, because I was such a consummate fool, that the temptation was irresistible. All my notions of surprising my good parents by my wonderful good fortune were at an end. I saw myself lost, betrayed, despised. I wonder I did not kill myself. Doubtless he would have been glad if I had: he even re-

fused to give me money to pay my fare home ; he told me insolently that he had another pretty girl to follow now, and he said he thought she would give him a little more trouble than I had done, as I was pretty easy. Oh, he is a wicked, cruel man ! Well, I wrote to my poor father to tell him the truth, and to ask him for money to take me home ; he sent it, and I went, but, oh ! I can never forget the horror my mother expressed at my conduct. She has never been to me the same since. My father wrote to Harvey Aubrey and told him what his son had done. Mrs. Aubrey must be a kind lady ; she answered the letter ; she said that she should not be surprised to hear even worse of her son, who was a most fearful libertine. My mother is determined I shall go abroad to my uncle in America. I am willing to go if I may take my baby with me. Now, do you know Robert Aubrey is as mean as he is wicked ; he gave me some beautiful presents to tempt me at first—a lovely gold watch and



a diamond ring, and a beautiful ruby brooch ; well, he actually took them all away to give to some other girl ; all that he left me was that locket."

She was exhausted with long speaking and sunk back on her pillow. Poor little, simple, foolish thing ; the loss of the gold watch seemed among the heaviest of her troubles ; but the double-dyed villany of her seducer was too horrible to contemplate. Could this brutal creature be Robert ? and Anne's heart said loudly, " no, it is not Robert," while her reason said it is he. Which of these was right ? That evening she sat and talked confidentially to Mrs. Eastdom. She ventured to breathe her strange doubt to her of the identity of Robert with the seducer of her child ; but when she asked her on what ground her hypothesis of an impostor in his name was built, she could adduce nothing tangible except that Amy admitted that the hair in the painting was of a darker colour than the hair of her quondam Robert Aubrey, whereas



Anne could vouch for its being precisely the same shade as that of the Robert of her acquaintance, she laughed her to scorn, the embittered, heart-broken woman; she asked her if the proofs of the writing were not sufficient; she reminded her that Robert was a systematic seducer by his own step-mother's account, and she expressed her belief that hers was not the only hearth that he had rendered desolate.

"Mrs. Eastdom, do not send your beautiful, simple-hearted child across the ocean."

She spoke thus out of sheer pity, and because all jealousy towards Amy was gone completely from her.

"I cannot live under the same roof with my child, once so pure, and with the living proof of her shame also. No, she is as dead to me as though my impious prayer had been heard, and she lay in her coffin. She must go, her uncle is rich, and will befriend her. He is my own and only brother."

"I can't help blaming that Hannah Fisher," Anne said, "that Amy talks of—"

"Yes, she is a serpent. I read her well. She was at first jealous of the admiration the wretched girl received. Then she was doubtless bribed with gold watches and trinkets to connive at the ruin of the poor, helpless fool." That night Anne made up her mind to try and contrive a meeting between Robert and Amy, before witnesses, so that she might solve her doubts at once. The next day she returned to Yanly Manor. Elsie came in the carriage that was sent for her, and with many thanks to her kind though stern hostess, and an affectionate adieu from the simple, gentle, Amy, she quitted the hospitable farmhouse; she had been ill there three weeks.

"Robert has had a letter from Lord Huntley," was Elsie's first piece of news when they had been seated a few moments in the carriage, "and he will leave us next week for Italy."

Anne felt her cheek pale and red by turns,

and her heart beat violently. Going, going away. Oh! Robert, Robert, could he tell what agony this parting will cause? one being under his roof knew, but, thank God, he will not know it. She had been always cold to him, and now she will be colder, let him be innocent or guilty. She will still love him, but he shall find her indifferent, icy, hard.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Elsie, boisterously.

"About the Eastdoms."

"I don't like them, I don't like that pale ooman at all."

"Woman, Elsie, not ooman. You have been talking to John again."

"Yes, I have a little, but I won't say ooman again. Do you know Robert is going to take John with him abroad?"

When they entered the park gates, they descended, and desired the coachman to drive on towards the house. Anne accompanied Elsie into the pretty lodge of Nelly Stokes. The first object she saw on entering

the neatly-sanded kitchen was Robert, seated at a little table, holding his head moodily in his hand. He sprang up when he saw her, and gave her a hearty but gentle greeting. Do what she would the rebellious blood mounted into her cheeks, and she felt ready to sink with confusion, while her voice trembled in spite of herself.

In that moment, Robert Aubrey learnt her secret. She read his knowledge in the pitying look he gave her, and in the flush that mantled over his features.

"I have been very ill indeed," she stammered.

"But you are better now," he said, kindly, "you have quite a colour. I think that old Doctor Piercy who attended you is a very skilful man. I had far rather trust myself to his care than to that of our village doctor and family friend," a slight sneer on the last word.

"I don't think I have ever seen Dr. Gilton," she said.

"No? Why scarcely a week passes that he does not pay two or three visits to Mrs. Aubrey, whose state of health requires constant attention, and you have never seen the sleek, smooth, country doctor? Sleek and smooth at least to my step-mother and the great folks round—the poor would tell a different tale. I detest and distrust Gilton, and yet he is always most abject to me."

"Prejudice," said Anne.

"Perhaps so. Well, Miss Cave, has Elsie told you that Yanly Manor is to be freed of my presence next Tuesday? Yes, I set out for La Belle France on Tuesday."

"Shan't you be sorry when Robert is gone?" asked Elsie, seizing her hand suddenly.

But the entrance of Nelly Stokes fortunately saved her the awkwardness of a reply. She saw only her foster child, whom she embraced with a show of real feeling, while he did not disdain to bend down his noble head and kiss the old withered cheek affec-

tionately. When Nelly perceived Miss Cave, she was brimful of kind welcomes and good wishes, and when she would have left the house both Nelly Stokes and Robert were full of entreaties that she would stay and rest a few minutes longer.

“And now you are come, Master Robert, and Miss Elsie, and you, Miss Cave, will you stay and take a cup of tea with me this afternoon? I have such a nice little cake in the oven. Come do, Master Robert, just for once, like old times. Many and many a time have you and George taken tea here with nurse.”

“I will stay, Nelly,” said Robert, glancing at Anne Cave.

“What does Miss Cave say?”

The loud entreaties of Elsie, and indeed of all three, overcame her resolutions, and I blush to say, she took off her bonnet and remained, but she resolved to acquaint Mrs. Aubrey, on the first opportunity, of her imprudence.

While Nelly bustled about to get the tea, Elsie put the very question to Robert that Anne would have liked to put if she had dared:—

“Robert, you said one night, nobody ever loved anybody unless they were relations. Why does Nelly love you so much if that is true?”

“I did not say servants and dependants could not have a sort of love to their masters. That is quite a different thing. It is with them a kind of fealty or loyalty, such as we feel for the king; besides, Nelly is my foster-mother. She really has a kind of love for me, and also for George, and a very good kind of love it is too.”

Just then Nelly came in with her china tea-things, the hot cake, and a little jug of cream, and they sat down to the table.

“Do you ever hear from George, Master Robert?” said Nelly.

“No,” was the morose answer.

“Why not?” persisted Nelly.

“George is too great a gentleman; moves

in too expensive a set, and holds me in too great disdain to write to me—he believes all the tales that his mother tells him of me.”

Nelly sighed.

“It’s a sad pity,” she said, “a great pity, all the children against him, and he the heir too—it’s a mortal pity.”

“Not all the children—not me!” cried Elsie, earnestly.

“It’s no pity,” cried Robert; “I can do very well without them all, only I am hurt that my step-mother has the power to poison my father’s ear so much against me, and what in Heaven’s name have I done? I am not in any sense of the word dissipated, although she will have it I am.”

Anne Cave looked him full in the face, and said:

“Mr. Aubrey, do you ever shoot in the preserves belonging to the estate?”

“Certainly. Why?”

“Will you take your gun to-morrow and go in the direction of Cherrywoods? Will



you take a note from me to Miss Amy Eastdom, and say that you are to give it into her own hands, and no other, and if Mrs. Eastdom refuses to let you see her, will you bring the note back to me?"

"Why, why," he answered, in perfect amaze, "what can you mean?"

"You need not think that I am about to have a relapse of brain fever, Mr. Aubrey; but it is most essential that you should stand in the presence of Amy Eastdom, and with her mother for a witness. Elsie, you must not mention a word of this, it is something too difficult for you to understand; but I know you won't speak of it. Now, Mr. Aubrey, will you go? or will you not?"

"Give me first a word of explanation," he said.

"No, it is not a subject on which I can speak to you; but I wish you would do this, and if you are innocent of a terrible charge, you will."

"Now, Elsie, we must go—good evening, Mr. Aubrey—the note shall be ready for you to-morrow morning—will you take it?"

"Most decidedly I will, and I must get a glimpse of this fair damsel Amy."

"Yes, you must tell her you are Robert Aubrey, and ask her if she has ever seen you before—do you understand?"

"I see that there is a plot somewhere, and that you are my friend; give me your hand—I like to clasp the hand of a friend." He clasped it kindly, even affectionately, and Anne Cave accompanied Elsie to the house, but first she thanked poor Nelly for her hospitality.

Mrs. Aubrey did not send for Miss Cave that night, although she received a very kind message from her; but old Harvey insisted on her accompanying Elsie into his study, as it was called, though why it went by such a name nobody has been able to tell. The little tin boxes, labelled with the names of different

farms and estates ; the heavy iron chests ; the securities, bonds, and mortgages, which were piled and arranged on the shelves ; the well worn leather-covered chair, with stained mahogany table (and unswept carpet, for no domestic was ever suffered to enter this sanctum) ; all gave it more the appearance of the office of a thriving country attorney, than the study of a gentleman of fortune. The little meagre attorney squire, his long nose, red at the tip, probably from indigestion, for he had just dined, his breeches and stockings dusty and worn, his faded carpet slippers down at heel, his sandy hair uncombed and dingy, and yet with a great gold chain and massive seals dangling from his faded waistcoat pocket, presented a strange type of an English gentleman and head of a good family. With the weak querulous voice in which the old man always spoke, and which most probably had not been much sweeter in its tones even in the days when he had breathed loving words into the ears of Miss Sydney, Mr. Harvey

Aubrey bade Anne welcome back to Yanly Manor, and asked her, quite tenderly, after her health.

"I would have come up to Cherrywoods to see you, my dear," he said, "but really I was not equal to the excitement of talking about this sad affair which I suppose Mrs. Eastdom has told you of.

"Oh, my dear, I wish I had had all girls, they are not half the trouble of boys. I am afraid Robert is a sad, wild, reckless, cruel lad by all accounts. I have not mentioned the subject to my son, because I am not equal to exciting conversation, but I will not see him, except when I am compelled, then I am as short as possible. Oh, to think that all this property, which I have saved and improved for years, must go to that wild, wicked lad; he will knock through it in three years, he will indeed. If George had been the elder son, now George is careful; but, dear me, this must be uninteresting talk to you. I suppose you know Emily is gone?"

Anne did not know it. She had not thought of her nor asked after her. It had struck her as rather unkind, that she had not managed to drive over once to Cherrywoods, to ask after her ; but then, doubtless, she had been greatly busied in preparations for her visit to London, so she answered—

“No, sir—when did they leave?”

“Last Wednesday week. Emily is a fine girl, is she not?”

“Most beautiful,” Anne answered, “*the* most beautiful girl I have ever seen.”

The little grey eyes twinkled with a pleased expression, but only for a moment.


“She is a cold hearted girl,” he said, “her mother was very beautiful at her age.”

Then, after a pause, “Do you like Yanly Manor, Miss Cave?”

“Very much indeed.”

“It’s a pretty place,” he asked, “is it not?” just in the same way as he said, that Emily was a fine girl. Again she said that “the country around, the gardens, and grounds,

were beautiful," and with a sort of sigh he remarked that "somehow it was a melancholy old house after all." Poor old man, the melancholy was in his own darkened and disappointed life. To her he could not talk of interest, land, mortgages, and cent. per cent.; and he had not much conversation for other topics. He went to a little cupboard which Anne had not perceived, and brought out a bottle of port wine, two glasses, and a plate of rich cake; he told her he kept these things ready always for his lunch, and that Elsie often came in to get a slice of cake and a drop of wine. He asked Anne to take a glass of port, but she told him that Mr. Piercy had expressly forbidden her tasting anything of the sort for some weeks; she could not, however, refuse to put her lips to the glass, and wish him health, for he was a tottering, feeble old man; both he and Mrs. Aubrey seemed to hold their lives on uncertain tenure. He drank deep into the bumper which he filled, and wished her good health and a good hus-



band. Elsie laughed merrily, and asked to taste the wine herself, that she might wish Miss Cave a good wish; no sooner was her request granted, than she looked her full in the face, and said, "I wish you good health, Miss Cave, and *Robert* for your husband." Women are more suspicious of each other than men are. Had Elsie said this before Mrs. Aubrey, she would have suspected everything the speech *might* have implied. Mr. Aubrey, on the contrary, saw only the thoughtlessness of a child, and never for a moment implicated her in any way.

"Elsie," he said, "you do not wish Miss Cave, a very good husband, when you wish her Robert."

"Why, what has he done, papa? something about Cherrywoods, is it? You said just now it was a sad affair. I must find out what he has done, but I believe it is a story which that nasty woman, Mrs. Eastdom, has been telling of him; some one is always telling tales of poor dear Robert."

“Mrs. Eastdom is not a nasty woman,” Anne replied, “she has been very good to me while I was ill at her house. She has had a great deal of trouble, and that makes her pale and sad.”

Elsie was silent, but after a pause she said, “I don’t know if trouble has made her disagreeable or not. I suppose it must, as you say so, Miss Cave dear, but I do consider her rather nasty, at least not a nice woman; she looked at me so savagely while you lay ill on the sofa, and when I went into the kitchen to ask for some milk afterwards, like I used to do when Mrs. Foster was there, she took me by the shoulder and pushed me out of the room, and said, “go away, little lady, you shall have milk in the parlour, we don’t want fine young ladies here in the kitchen— Oh, I did feel so angry; fancy being called a fine young lady. Oh, Miss Cave, I hate her.”

“She is not a pleasant woman, Elsie, but you must not say you hate her.”

Mr. Aubrey then struck in. “Miss Cave,





you are just the one to manage that child, always so judicious and kind. She wants management, and she will be the best child in the world."

The governess now rose to bid good night. A thought struck her, as she sat talking in the study,—what if, when Robert presented himself, and admitting that Mrs Eastdom permitted him to see Amy, they should both come to the conclusion, that he was not the real Robert. Now, she saw that he must have a witness known to both parties, whom?

Anne had it. Mr. Piercy, the good natured village doctor of Cherrywoods. Hastening to her room, she sat down and penned the following note to that gentleman :—

"DEAR SIR,

"Will you kindly introduce Mr. Robert Aubrey to your patient, Mrs. Eastdom's daughter. I believe she labours under a great mistake in regard to him, albeit five minutes' conversation will set all right. If

you will do this, you will confer a lasting favour—”


“On whom?”

“On one, Anne Cave.”

Was her name to be handed about as that of the young woman who busied herself so much in the affairs of Robert Aubrey, and what if the charge were true, would he not be the first to laugh at her for her pains? The governess could not decide upon any fixed plan. She bathed her face, and arranged her hair preparatory to going down to supper in the dining-room with Elsie.

Anne felt that she must see Robert again, and tell him that her first plan would not answer; this was Wednesday, and he was to start on the following Tuesday. Was there no public place where he could meet with Amy before witnesses—Church? Alas she would not surely leave the house for another three weeks, at least.

On descending to the dining-room, Anne



found only Elsie, who greeted her with her usual affection, and they sat down to supper, of which she could not partake with appetite. Elsie eat enormously as she mostly did at her meals. Elsie was growing fast, and was full of activity. Anne Cave sat and watched her demolish a large plateful, and then she could not forbear laughing; "any more — Elsie?"

"No, thank you," she said, blushing.

"Don't be ashamed, Elsie; a good appetite is a very good thing."

The rosy, healthy child of scarcely twelve summers, glowing with life and strength, or the feeble, tottering attorney, whose years already numbered more than three-score — which seemed the most likely to live longest?

As Mark, the old servant, disappeared with the supper tray, she took Elsie into the window seat and began to admonish her.


"Never, on any account, mention my name in connection with that of your brother Robert, in the way you have done to Mr. Harvey Aubrey; it is very wrong, Elsie, you

know; besides being unkind towards me, it is wrong, because your brother Robert must of course marry a lady of equal rank and fortune with himself, and not a poor dependent governess like myself; it is unkind, because it might lead people to think that I wanted to marry Robert."

"And would it be wrong of you to want to marry Robert?" asked Elsie, laying her hand on Miss Cave's lap. "Would it be wrong?"

"Oh, Elsie," she said, half bitterly, "don't you know I am here as a governess to instruct you, not to think of marrying your brother. I am not in the same sphere or rank. I have not a penny unless I work for it. It would be madness, folly, wickedness, on my part, to entertain such an idea for an instant; ask anybody, and they will tell you the same."

"I shan't. I don't like those sort of people who would call you not good enough for Robert, or for the king himself," she added, with enthusiasm, and kissing her hand.



"Dear Miss Cave, I wish you would marry Robert, and let me come and live with you both. How happy we three should be."

"Don't talk so, Elsie;" then in a hurried manner she said, "I trust you will not speak thus to Robert."

"Dear me, I have done so lots and lots of times."

"Elsie, Elsie!" the governess exclaimed, almost choked; "I did not think you could have been so unkind."

"Unkind! I am sure I praised you to the skies, while you were at Cherrywoods, and I said 'oh, Robert, do ask Miss Cave to marry you, and let us all go and live away together,' and Robert would laugh and say sometimes one thing, and sometimes another, but they were all excuses, as though he did not want to have you; he always said you were good and pretty, but, about marrying, he always seemed to find an excuse, first he said 'I am too poor, I can't afford to marry for many years,' so at last I thought to myself, I wish

Miss Cave would ask him to marry her, he would be sure not to refuse."

"And I suppose you hinted this bright thought to Robert?" she said, almost crying with mortification.

"No, I did not, that would have spoiled all. I know the reason why Robert won't marry, though, and I told him so, but he got dreadfully angry—the only time I ever remember Robert being angry with me—he caught me by the arm, and quite hurt me, he held me so hard, and said,

"‘Never, never mention her name again to me, Elsie, remember you know nothing about it; that happened when you were too young to understand, but I will never hear that cursed woman’s name from your lips.’ That was a bad name you know to call her. I never saw her, that I remember, but I know the reason why he won’t fall in love again is because of her."

"Because of who, Elsie?" Anne asked, almost fiercely.

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"Jane Vaughan," answered Elsie, quite composedly, and totally unconscious of the anguish and torment of jealousy she was causing Anne. "Robert was almost mad with love for her, and they were to have been married, but mamma came between them—she told Miss Vaughan some things about Robert, and Miss Vaughan gave him up at once. Now she is married to the Count de Maine, a Frenchman."

"And he loved her very much," Anne Cave said, after a pause, during which the room seemed to swim, and a stifling sensation at the chest quite alarmed her.

"Loved her? I should think he did—he nearly went mad for her sake."

A stealthy footstep—a voice at Miss Cave's elbow—and then was heard the words:


"Mamselle Elsie, come to your mamma's room; I have a light outside."

Christine had heard all.

Anne Cave did not care nor fear; one thought alone possessed her; Robert had

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loved—did most probably at this moment love some one in his own rank; how shortsighted, blinded, she must have been not to have perceived that it was the bitterness arising from slighted love which had dictated those words of his; that no unselfish, devoted, disinterested affection could exist in this world; he had loved then with all the might and strength and deep tenderness of which his nature was capable; and Anne had at one time supposed that it was an Amy Eastdom who had his heart. Oh, Anne Cave, learn the truth now in bitterness of mind, with groanings of spirit; you, what are you? a paid dependent, a pale-faced every-day girl, who might indeed, had you been born rich or noble, have laid some claim to beauty, but as it is now, you would be passed unnoticed. You are very well in your way, Anne Cave—as Mrs. Harvey Aubrey's governess—but you are nothing more; and you have dared to love, to worship this heir of land and wealth. You, you, do you not





despise yourself? Go to the glass in your room, and what do you see there? A pale-face, not handsome or even pretty, large brown eyes, small features. Yes, you are not plain, but you might meet a dozen fairer faces in any day's walk. Who was this woman that had dared to spurn Robert Aubrey? She hated her more for the misery she had caused him, than for jealousy itself.

The lady was of noble birth certainly, beautiful beyond expression, proud, cold, worldly; what mind and acquirements had she?

Anne saw her accomplished, elegant, lovely, *not* intellectual. A woman high-minded, high-souled, poetic, could not, would not spurn the love of such a man as Robert Aubrey.

She *hated* her; how long she remained with her head buried in the pillow, over which she leaned in her distraction, she knew not. Then Anne heard a sob behind her, turned, and saw poor Elsie in the greatest

grief—listened to her tale of how Christine had heard her tell Miss Cave of Robert's love affair, and had informed Mrs. Aubrey of the whole in French, in the presence of Elsie, how she caught a word here and there, so as to understand, and not be astonished when her mamma had turned upon her, and boxed her ears, and violently grasped her arm until it was black and blue—called her a vulgar little tell-tale, and threatened her with a horse-whipping. Yes, a horse-whipping, if she told fibs and tales again. She ended by saying, between smothered sobs, and you are to go to mamma at ten o'clock to-morrow morning.

Miss Cave, without pity or sympathy for the sufferings of Elsie; without thinking of her, Miss Cave exclaimed, "fibs and tales; was it not true what you told me about Miss Vaughan?"

"Yes true, quite true. I have heard mamma and Emily talk about it lots of times; also, I have heard Robert say, mamma had

made him wretched for the rest of his life, and that she wanted to drive him to kill himself. It's quite five years since it happened, but I have heard them talk of it quite lately."

"Well, Elsie, go to bed, sleep, and forget it all;" and Anne began to unfasten Elsie's dress.

Christine entered without rapping—"Pardon, Mademoiselle, I am come to assist Mademoiselle Elsie to undress."

Anne Cave was thoroughly roused that night, hardened and reckless of consequences, and in a quiet determined tone she said—

"Mamselle Elsie has done without your assistance hitherto. She will dispense with it to-night. I wish to be alone, you can therefore go."

Christine stared at the governess; with her large black eyes, in blank astonishment, across her withered and shrunken face there passed an indescribable expression; she curtsied, smiled, and said, "Mademoiselle is always

*charmante*—*charmante* when gay and gentle, even *plus charmante* when a little *triste* and angry, as Mademoiselle is to-night. May Mademoiselle's sleep be excellent, and her dreams of the person she loves best. *Bon soir*, Mesdames"—she curtsied again, and withdrew.

Anne felt she had made her an enemy for life.

"That's right, dear good Miss Cave," said Elsie, eagerly, "how glad I am you served her so."


"Good night, dear Elsie," Anne returned, "go to bed at once, don't talk to me, I can't bear it."

Anne had a strange wild dream that night, but no doubt her lately excited brain might have accounted for that—she dreamt she was wandering alone in some foreign land, in a city more magnificent than any she had ever seen, or imagined; it was moonlight, but the streets were filled with gaily dressed people, and bands of soldiers were marching in all

directions. She wandered on and on, until she came to a crowd more dense and stationary. She turned to question a bystander; he raised his hat from his features, and she discovered Robert; but Robert, pale, haggard, ragged, wretched Robert, the wreck of his former self; he started when he saw her, and grasped her shoulder as though in a vice.

“Anne Cave,” he said, “if you betray me, or mention my name, I will murder you. I have a dagger in my pocket, sheathed in leather, but I will sheath it in your heart, if you move from my side, or speak one word. If you do, it shall drink your best life blood.”

Shuddering with terror, and yet clinging to him with love, she followed him again through the city, speaking no word, making no sign, breathless with a terror of something unseen and unknown. At length, they passed a house from whence proceeded sounds of music and dancing—floods of light streamed out upon them from the windows, and there stepped forth the figure of a lady splendidly



dressed, whom, on near approach, she found to be Mrs. Aubrey; she stood right before them, and quite intercepted their path.

"Anne Cave," she said, "with whom are you walking the streets at night? who is this ragged man?"

Anne did not speak, nor attempt to, for she felt the vice-like hand at her shoulder.

"Is this Mr. Piercy? Is it Mr. Harvey Aubrey, your *betrotted*? Ah! ah! is it Robert Aubrey?"

She tore the cap from his eyes as she spoke, and disclosed his face, then she clapped her hands wildly, and cried, "quick, quick, he is here, he is safe!"

Two ruffians with blackened faces leaped forth, and attempted to seize Robert, but he fled before them swiftly. The house before which they stood took fire, and blazed, and flamed, and fell in, as is the fashion of a dream. In two or three minutes, Anne awoke, shuddering and quaking in every limb, with a strange fear over her, of what she knew not.

However, she soon composed herself again to sleep, and this time she slept peacefully, and the next morning the bright August sun gilding with his cheerful beams the Yanly woods and park, put her into better spirits, and dispelled her ghostly terrors.

When she presented herself before Mrs. Aubrey the next morning, she expected severe reproof, stern displeasure; she found her smiling, kind, affectionate.

"Sit down, Miss Cave, poor dear girl, you do look ill; how imprudent of you to have ridden with a headache, and feeling ill. In the first place, through such a hot sunshine. You found Mrs. Eastdom very kind, did you not?"

"Very kind, Madam, she sent for a doctor at once."

"Doctor Piercy?"

"Yes."

"I know, had she consulted me, I should have sent our family physician, Doctor Gilton, in whom I have great confidence."

Then after a pause, "Elsie has lost some time, Miss Cave."

"Yes," she said, hastily, "I must have no holidays at Christmas, this year."

"Do not begin to exert yourself for a day or two, Miss Cave," returned Mrs. Aubrey, kindly.

Another long pause—Anne began to wonder what she would say next, and to take note of Mrs. Aubrey's sleeping, and, indeed, sitting room; it had three windows looking out on to the neglected gardens. A thick Turkey carpet, much worn, covered the floor; the chairs, sofas, and bed curtains were of the same dark damask as the curtains; on her toilette table, which was of carved walnut wood, and was very beautiful, stood a number of elegant trifles, gold and silver scent bottles, a silver vase filled with the choicest flowers from the greenhouse, and fastened into the wall was a magnificent pier glass, with filigree silver frame and silver sconces, for burning wax tapers; its polished surface had reflected the



faultless form and face of Kate Aubrey, the bride, eight and twenty years before; and still, at morning and evening, the same and yet not the same Kate Aubrey sat before it, while her French waiting-woman brushed out her long thick tresses. Anne thought of this, and much more, before Mrs. Aubrey spoke again. She sat leaning her elbow on her writing table, with her chin resting in her hand, looking at Anne Cave with a half smile, and not speaking.

At length she said, "Do you know what I have to say to you this morning?"

"No, Madam."

"You cannot guess?"

She would not try, but she would not tell her that; Anne only shook her head, and said "No, Madam."

"Well," said Mrs. Aubrey, removing her elbow from the table and sitting upright, "I have some business to-day; first of all, you know I corrected Elsie last night, for having told you some family affairs, of which she

knows nothing, and has only formed her own childish conclusions from words dropped inadvertently in her presence."

Anne Cave bowed her head, acquiescently, and her heart began to beat with a wild hope that after all Elsie *might* have been mistaken, and Robert might *not* so have loved this detestable Jane Vaughan. Anne hung breathlessly on every word of Mrs. Aubrey. She hoped she would tell her what she wanted to hear, whether it was *true* or not?

"Robert loved to distraction a young lady of good birth, great accomplishments, some beauty, but no fortune—Jane Vaughan had not a penny. Robert Aubrey has next to nothing until his father's death—Harvey would not give him a fraction more; *he* knew *what* I did, and *he* approved. I asked Jane Vaughan how she was to live, supposing she married Robert, until he came into his property. I represented to her that Harvey might live twenty years longer. I asked her if she wished to prolong the engagement to an in-

definite period? She thanked me for my information and advice. She dismissed Robert, and to all his whimpering entreaties, she returned for answer, emphatically, no! Two months after she married the Count de Main. She is a true woman of the world; a clever, fascinating woman of the world, sensible, calm, passionless—if she have a passion, it is for aggrandisement. Would such a woman have been happy with poverty, expectancy, and Robert Aubrey? No, I did very right. I would do the same to-morrow, though my step-son has cursed me to my face many times on account of it.”

She paused, and Anne Cave felt that her cruel eyes were reading the changes in her downcast countenance; did she see, and rejoice at her torment?

Anne thought so, for when she looked up, she had a strange malicious smile at the corners of her mouth.

She continued. “You were angry with Christine last night, Miss Cave. Christine

only obeyed my orders. Ill health, for the most part, keeps me a prisoner to my room. Christine understands all my affairs, Miss Cave, and has from my childhood. I tell her to mark what is wrong in my household, and report to me ; she is hated by the other servants, by Robert, by Elsie. She is a stranger in a strange land. She suffers by being called spy, informer, tale-bearer—she bears all bravely for my sake, for love of me, to whom she has devoted her whole life. I told her to go and report what account Elsie was giving you of my chastisement. You see I am open and frank with you, Miss Cave.”

“Am I to understand, Mrs. Aubrey, that this person is to be a continual spy upon my words and actions?”

“Understand,” she answered, coldly, “that I have at present complete confidence in you, individually, because you have promised to avoid flirtation with Robert, which is all I require of you. Christine has no orders from me to watch *you*. I trust you,

because I read truth in your eye, bound by your promise, though you loved him to madness, you would never admit of love passages from him now, I am certain."

Anne Cave was flattered. It was natural she should be, at this perfect belief in her faith and honour; but she never dreamt then of doubting Mrs. Aubrey, when she expressed herself so plainly, and with such apparent frankness. She believed that she left her now unwatched, and yet when she looked back to that time, it seemed that she must have been strangely blinded to have trusted a person whom her natural instinct told her, even then, was deep, crafty, and designing.

"You trust me, Mrs. Aubrey," she said, "and your trust shall not be misplaced. Yet you are not aware perhaps that I took tea last night in Nelly Stokes's cottage, with Mr. Robert Aubrey and Miss Elsie."

A change passed over the lady's face, a deep crimson flush came for an instant to her brow, cheeks, and what was seen of her finely

formed throat; it passed off, leaving paler than usual that calm, handsome countenance. Her voice was firm, when she asked Anne:

“How did you know Nelly Stokes?”

“I travelled with her on the mail from London.”

“And doubtless got very intimate with the inveterate gossip.”

Now, if the truth may be told—Nelly Stokes was an inveterate gossip, she dearly loved a listener to her stories, and reminiscences, and her excuse (at the end of the history with which she had favoured Anne Cave) for being so communicative to a stranger, was, “that the whole story of the count and the lady was known to every servant in the house.” If this had been true a dozen years before, it was not so now.

Mark, the butler, who was deaf and taciturn, and Christine, were the only two servants, who had remained at the Manor out of the set of highly paid and pampered menials to whom the translated letters had been read;

neither of these could ever have spoken to Anne Cave on the subject ; and if the cook, housemaid, and John, ever had heard Nelly Stokes's tale, they would not have told it to her. She even believed Williams, the fat coachman, himself was in complete ignorance of the circumstances of the death of Count Schaumburg. Anne Cave was on her guard instantly ; she knew intuitively that where she was herself so intimately concerned Mrs. Aubrey naturally would be more nervous, less penetrating. Anne did not colour nor stammer then in answering ; she said :

“ Nelly Stokes never spoke to me at all, until we came in sight of Yanly Manor, then afterwards she was very kind, and looked after my luggage, and shewed me the way to the house, and I have never been to see her until last evening.” Every word of this was true.

Mrs. Aubrey seemed relieved, she appeared even to have forgotten Robert for the time,

but returning to the charge almost immediately she said, smiling :

“ Well, as you have confessed yourself, I will not scold you for that; but you know it was not right after your promise; however, let us proceed to the real business I have to communicate to you. It seems you were foolish enough to tell this poor girl, Robert’s victim, that you had great doubts as to her seducer being really Robert. Now, unfortunately, this has made some impression on the poor child, and last night an express messenger was sent to me with a request that I would contrive to procure her a meeting with my step-son. To silence your absurd doubts, for which you have not the slightest grounds, I have decided to comply with this strange request. I have sent word to Harvey, and he has written a note of condolence to Mrs. Eastdom, and has given it to Robert, with orders to deliver it himself. I intend to go myself to Cherrywoods; will you accompany me in the



carriage? Robert, who knows nothing of our plans, will be greatly astonished to meet us there; it will not do for him to affect innocence any longer when confronted with his victim. Then, when you have heard her condemn him with her own lips, you will perhaps lay your doubts aside, and not any longer look on me as the false accuser of my step-son."

She spoke with such confidence and calm assurance that Anne Cave perceived at once she believed honestly in his guilt. What if he were indeed guilty, would the idol then fall? She could not say, her loving heart would probably even then have found excuses for conduct so hardened and base; but he could not thus have acted. True she had heard of men, heartlessly jilted as Robert had been, who had sworn revenge on the whole sex in consequence. She had read of such men in books; but he did not seem to her to be one of those men; and then this Amy was such a child, such an innocent creature, so fair, and

so beloved, and the only child of her parents. No, no, no ; Robert had not done this ! She rose, smiling and confident.

“I am ready to go with you, Madam.”

“Well, go, and get your bonnet ; promise me,” and she too rose, and laid her thin hand on Anne’s shoulder, “promise me that when this is settled, you will never doubt my word again, *whatever* I may tell you.”

Anne looked into those cruel eyes, and she could not promise—why Mrs. Aubrey honoured her with so much of her confidence—she an insignificant girl, she could not imagine. Mrs. Aubrey must have some plot in regard to her, what was it ?

“Promise !” she repeated.

“Yes, if it—”

“Turn out that Mr. Aubrey has really acted so basely ; that will do, now go.”

She went, and shortly after Mrs. Aubrey and the governess were rolling on the smooth level roads that led to Cherrywoods. What, if Robert should not be there ? That was

the most tormenting thought of all ; anything would be better than this torture of suspense.

“ These are all our lands,” said Mrs. Aubrey, with a half sigh.

Anne looked over the fair fields of grain, ripe for the sickle ; the orchards bending with fruit, the woods and farmsteads in the distance ; and, prompted by a queer feeling of malice, she replied :—

“ And all will one day be Mr. Robert’s ?”

The self-possession of that woman was immense. She grew a shade paler, and closed her eyes, as though she were unwilling for Anne to read their expression, but she made no answer whatever to her foolish speech. Had Anne Cave gained her also for an enemy ?

They drew up by the gate of the garden, in front of the house, a long strip of grass planted with poplars, which gave a formal melancholy appearance to the old place. The door stood ajar. They entered. On one side in the little parlour, on the sofa, lay Amy. A fire burned in the grate ; the old father sat

with bowed head in the arm chair. Mrs. Eastdom was at the table, reading aloud from the book of Psalms ; she sat bolt upright and never altered her position, nor took the least notice of the visitors when they entered.

“ When thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment; every man therefore, is but vanity. Hear my prayer, oh Lord, and with thine ears consider my calling ; hold not thy peace at my tears, for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. Oh, spare me a little that I may recover my strength before I go hence and be no more seen.”

She closed the book, and rose to welcome her guests. Amy burst into a passion of tears at the conclusion of the last verse. Mrs. Eastdom placed chairs for the ladies. Two strange stern women were they both. The lady, fashionably and tastefully attired in a delicate lilac silk dress, a black lace mantle, a small white silk bonnet, beneath which her

raven hair was arranged artistically, elegant, perfumed, self-possessed, condescending, and yet proud to a degree. The farmer's wife, educated beyond her station, full of strong sound sense, with an indomitable unbending will, possessed with a bitter maddening sense of wrong, and outrage, and shame, proud too in her way, with an unflinching, unyielding pride, all the sterner and stronger for the feeling of humiliating degradation that oppressed her. In that cotton morning gown, with her grey hair, combed smooth, beneath her clean, plain cap, she seemed to disdain all outward adornments.

After her visitors were seated she remained standing, and she did not speak one word beyond what the commonest civility required.

"Robert has not yet arrived, Mrs. Eastdom?"

"No, madam; should he not come it will be a most convincing proof of his guilt."

"I want none, Mrs. Aubrey," returned Mrs. Eastdom, scornfully. "I have proof

enough there ;” and she pointed to the sofa where Amy lay.

“Miss Cave, it appears, wants further proof,” said Mrs. Aubrey ; “my step-son has contrived to impress her with the idea that he is the soul of honour, and unless your daughter will accuse him to his face, she will not believe him to be guilty.”

A sharp pang shot through Anne Cave at that moment. What if by some mischance Robert did not come, if his horse should break down, if he should be taken ill, if his step-mother had deceived her and he had had no orders to come at all ? While Mrs. Aubrey sat with a quiet scorn on her face as though perfectly convinced that he would not arrive, Mrs. Eastdom’s countenance had the same expression, but mixed with pain and anxiety. The father still sat with bowed head, the picture of deep uncomplaining grief. Amy changed colour every five minutes, and looked longingly towards the door ; as for Anne Cave, her breath was almost suspended,

she feared her face would betray her emotion, but she kept looking out of the window. Mrs. Aubrey drew out her beautiful little gold watch.

“Half-past twelve, he has had ample time, I shall only wait ten minutes longer.” Her voice was firm, even cheerful in its tone.

Oh, what suspense! silence in the little parlour, broken by the loud ticking of the clock in the corner—won’t come, come—won’t come, come, won’t come—won’t come, said the pendulum solemnly. Anne began to follow the patterns of the carpet with her eyes through all its intricacies—a Kidderminster, new and bright, and well-swept; from thence to the old-fashioned chairs and tables, brought from their happy home in Kent, heirlooms perhaps of the Eastdom family; then to the silver race cup on the mantel-shelf, won by farmer Eastdom in his youth; (silence in the little parlour of human voices), but still the heavy pendulum swung backwards and forwards with its dull refrain, won’t come, won’t

come, come, come, won't come ! Ha ! a horse's hoof on the road ; clatter, clatter, clatter, drowning the sound of the pendulum.

Yes, yes, he is come. Anne sees Robert at the gate, he descends, throws his bridle over the post, leaps to the ground, strides up the grass-path, whistles carelessly, raises the knocker, steps into the passage, catches a glimpse of Anne's face.

"Come in," she says, in a voice husky with emotion. He enters. Amy shrieks loudly, "this is not Robert Aubrey, I never, never saw that man before !"



## CHAPTER VIII.

## A CHANGE.

"NEVER saw him before?" It is Mrs. Eastdom who speaks; she has not lost her self-possession, but a flush mantles over her pale face, and she gazes inquiringly from the one to the other.

Mrs. Aubrey sat in speechless amaze, she grew white even to the lips; but she neither spoke nor moved.

"This is not Robert Aubrey," repeated Amy, confidently.

Then Anne Cave's voice returned—

"Yes, Amy, yes! this is Robert Aubrey. Your betrayer forged his name, and his hand writing, and spoke in his name; he is innocent! Robert Aubrey is innocent!"

Mrs. Aubrey turned round to her with an expression of disdain—

“This is a mistake, Miss Cave; Robert is perhaps innocent of this charge, but you are not called upon to be his champion. Come, the carriage is waiting; my son will doubtless clear himself; it is unbecoming, unwomanly, to linger here now.”

“Why unmaidenly and unbecoming, Madam,” Anne returned, “to find him proved innocent, when you yourself brought me hither to hear him proved guilty? Amy says that this is not her betrayer. You well know that he is your step-son Robert. Will you not say that you are glad he is not the man, who has brought the evil on the family here assembled?”

“You forget yourself sadly, Miss Cave,” returned Mrs Aubrey, loftily; “you have compromised your dignity by this display; pray remember what is due to yourself, and come home.”

Robert, who had stood like one in a dream,

silent, blushing, wondering, now found his voice, and turned respectfully towards Mrs. Eastdom, saying, quietly—

“What is the meaning of all this, Mrs. Eastdom? I entreat you to enlighten me; there is surely some fearful mistake somewhere?”

Calmly, plainly, quickly Mrs. Eastdom related to him the story of her wrongs; she pointed to her beautiful child, to her heart-broken husband, she apologised for her uncourteous reception of him the last time he had called; she pointed Anne Cave out as the one who had always doubted of his guilt; infected Amy with the idea, and so had been the means of bringing about the present meeting, and consequent explanation. His blue eyes wandered in the direction where Anne Cave stood; he gave her one glance full of kindly meaning, and then asked to see the forged letter and the portrait. Anne stood by, burning with anxiety and curiosity, never thinking that Mrs. Aubrey had actually

entered her carriage and driven off without her.

The letters were produced, and Robert's cheeks crimsoned deeply as he read the false words, and was obliged to admit that the writing was so like his own that he should have been himself deceived; then the portrait—yes, it was one that he had painted to give to a young lady; it had been stolen by a rascally London valet, four years ago; the same man had stolen his silk handkerchief, waistcoats, and purse containing three sovereigns, and had, on discovery, pleaded so hard for forgiveness, that Robert had let him go free, on condition of his returning the money and the locket; poor Robert, pinched for means, could not have borne the loss of three pounds. Anne sighed involuntarily as he told the tale. Well, the man had returned the money, but swore solemnly to having lost the locket.

“Then could this man be the villain?” asked poor Mrs. Eastdom.

"No," said Robert; "he was a poor ignorant fellow who could not write his name."

"He was a gentleman, I am sure," said Amy; "he used to have livery servants waiting for him, with his horses."

Robert turned towards her tenderly, tears were in his eyes, he took her beautiful little hand in his, saying :

"Thank God I never did wrong to such as you." Then, turning hastily away, he added, "he must be a person well acquainted with my hand writing, yet that is scarcely a clue, for I write so many letters in a year. What was he like—this man, this fiend, who told you he was Robert Aubrey—was he like me at all?"

"Only that his eyes were blue, and his skin fair, with a colour in his cheeks, like yours; but his hair was much lighter, his nose smaller, he was not so tall as you, slighter, not as manly-looking as you, his voice was more like a woman's—not a deep tone like yours. No, he was not like you."

Robert seemed to think deeply for a few minutes, then holding out his hand to Amy, he said, "Good bye, keep up your spirits, doubt not but that this monster who has wronged you, and tried to wrong me, will some day be brought to justice, and unmasked."

"It will not restore my child's purity and innocence, sir, if he should be," said Mrs. Eastdom, sadly. "No, for my part, I want not to see him, nor to hear of him. I am glad you are innocent, for you are our landlord's son, and will one day be our landlord. Take some wine, Mr. Aubrey; Miss Cave?"

"No, no," they exclaimed simultaneously. Anne Cave had an especial horror to sitting down to eat and drink over such troubles as these. Robert shared her feelings. But now, to her dismay, she discovered that Mrs. Aubrey had left her behind; thoughts of instant dismissal filled her mind; she gazed wistfully out of the window.

"How shall I get back?" she asked.

“Ride my horse,” Robert answered; “never mind the saddle, I will lead him.” There was no alternative. Anne embraced Amy, wished Mr. and Mrs. Eastdom good day, and followed Robert down the path; he stooped and lifted her into the saddle, and stood a moment by the horse’s head. How beautiful he looked; he held his velvet riding-cap in his hand, and the light summer breeze blew about his crisp chesnut curls; his small, statue-like head was bent down, and his fine countenance, touched with emotion, was a fit study for a painter; his riding-suit of dark green velvet, his high boots, spotless white linen, and well-gloved hand, are all before the writer, strong, manly, graceful, good he looked; dear Robert, dear to Anne then in his youthful pride and beauty; dear afterwards when the change came—when that noble young head was bowed down by sorrow, when that gallant heart was crushed and broken by injustice, cruelty, and fraud. He silently took the bridle, and the brave

horse followed his master meekly ; he was a fine creature, of a light bay colour.

"I am going to take Jack abroad with me," were Robert's first words. "John is going with me, and I will not trust my favourite to any other hands. You don't feel nervous," he added, with a smile.

"No, no, Mr. Aubrey."

"He is spirited, not quiet like the poor old mare you rode last to Cherrywoods.

"I have no fear."

"You need not while I am here, he is docility itself to me."

"Fear with him—never," thought Anne. "I could have followed him over mountains of fire, through rivers of deep water, to the end of the world, to the confines of eternity, and no thought of fear should have blanched my cheek."

On that day, with the white sunny road stretching out before them, with the corn fields rustling on either side, making sweet music in the breeze, it was not a time to think of



fear. He read Anne's full confidence in her countenance, for he smiled as he said—

“You do not belong to the tribe of nervous, fainting young ladies.”

His words sounded like praise, and she felt her face glow warmly.

“You have been very good to me, Miss Cave,” said Robert, seriously, after a few moments' silence; “had it not been for you I should have left this country with a foul stain on my name, and with my father's displeasure following me. Now I feel convinced he will befriend me, for his dark hints and strange coldness lately, all of which have puzzled me much, are cleared up and explained. You have been good, and disinterested, and kind; you have thought well of me through evil report. I am glad to have an opportunity of declaring that I am grateful; would that I could prove my gratitude;” he sighed as he spoke.

Anne replied after a short pause that she

should scarcely be again admitted to Yanly Manor, when she arrived there.

"How so?" he asked quickly.

"Did you not hear Mrs. Aubrey tell me that my conduct was unbecoming and unmaidenly in remaining to hear you proved innocent. Did you not hear me ask her if she were not glad to find you guiltless? and then she called me home. I disregarded her commands and she drove off without me. She will be terribly angry."

"If it be so," he said in a troubled voice, "and God knows what steps she may take if incensed against you, you will be cast upon the world through me, through your kindness to me. I am grateful—from my heart I say it—but I am helpless, how can I befriend you?"

Anne could not find her voice to speak, his emotion was infectious. He struck the whip he held, impatiently against his riding boots, and walked on in silence. Her heart sunk in spite of herself at this coldness. She did not

know what she had expected him to say, but she felt much the apparent indifference. It was she who spoke first afterwards.

"I shall start for home immediately, if Mrs. Aubrey dismisses me on my return. I have nowhere else to go," she said, thus hoping to make him speak, but he still continued silent. "It is a misfortune for me," she continued, getting quite irritated at his inattention, "that I allowed my feelings to carry me away, and my anxiety to see you righted. I wish I had gone home with Mrs. Aubrey;" still he walked on silently, holding the bridle carefully, and keeping close to the hedge side, where the blackberries were growing in clusters, as yet green, and the thick hawthorn grew high above their heads, so that she could not see to the field beyond, though she was mounted on a tall horse.

Anne was silent now herself, and mortified, and when at length Robert turned his face towards her and said

"This is a retired shady lane, such as you

seldom meet with, except in the Midlands," Anne was amazed at the irrelevancy of the remark.

"We have," she said, "wild heaths, deep, wide lakes, and thick forests in the North. I think, after all, one tires of eternal cultivation."

"Do you," he asked; "do you know I had begun to fancy that you were getting fond of this country, and of Yanly Manor, and, indeed, of all our villages nestling among their woods and mountains. Oh, there is no country I love so well as this."

Anne did not reply, and presently he turned to her with an amazed look.

"Have I offended you, Miss Cave, by praising my native country?"

"Oh, no," she said, trying to laugh off her annoyance.

"You certainly are annoyed with me," he said. "I read it plainly in your face. I am sorry, because I was going to speak to you seriously, and so seriously that perhaps I shall offend you again."

"Speak on, Mr. Aubrey," Anne said; "I have every confidence in you, that you will say nothing but what a gentleman ought to say, and I shall have no right to be offended."

"I do not know that, I have been making up my mind the last quarter of an hour to speak to you so plainly, that if, before I begin, you are offended, I know not what you will be when I have spoken."

"You are going to find fault with me, then?"

"No. I see nothing to find fault with; on the contrary, everything to praise. You are conscientious, generous, kind-hearted, pure-minded, and affectionate, but you are impulsive, imprudent, impetuous. Mrs. Aubrey was right when she told you to go home, and leave me to clear myself; you should have done so."

"Fear not," she said, angrily, "that I will again interfere in your affairs. I was foolish—very foolish, but I am well repaid by the contempt with which you have treated my

*imprudence* (with a stress on the last word). You said just now you were grateful, but had no means of showing your gratitude. I commend the worldly prudence which has enabled you to turn against me with reproaches instead; it must ease you wonderfully of the load of obligation."

"Do not be angry," he replied, quietly. "I do feel grateful for your good opinion of me in the first place, when all were against me, and I knew not of this false accusation; you have done me a great service, but you have compromised yourself."

"How so?"

"By letting everybody see that you *love me*," he answered firmly.

Anne almost bounded from the horse as he spoke. Pride, humiliation, rage, surprise, possessed her, and she cried loudly—

"I do not—how dare you, sir, insult me?"

"You do," he answered, quietly, and in a low tone. "I had the fever once, and I know

the symptoms; you are high-souled, noble, virtuous minded, but you love me."

"What do you mean?" she asked; "let me get off your horse and go back another way. I will not stay here to be insulted and taunted."

"I do not insult or taunt you, my dear girl. I am grateful—pleased at your affection, because it is quite disinterested and true. You come next to Elsie in my heart. Now, if you will listen without getting angry, I will tell you why you cannot have the first place there. Remember, I am not in the common sense of the word flattered at your preference. I am really grateful and pleased that you like me. You are young, and fair, and good. I prefer you to all other women. I am annoyed that anybody should for an instant blame your conduct, for I would protect you from the world's sneers, and I am grieved that you should be exposed to them. Are you still angry, or will you look on Robert Aubrey as a friend?"

His kind blue eyes turned towards her pleadingly; the manly tenderness of his voice touched her in spite of herself, and she answered more mildly—

“I think you mean to be kind, Mr. Aubrey, but you have a strange way of showing it.”

“Then let me tell you a real love tale—one that is acted on the world’s wide stage daily.”

“Are you the hero?”

“You shall judge how much like a hero I acted. I was a slave, a dupe, a madman, a fool.”

“And the heroine?”

His eyes flashed fiercely as he answered—

“Worthless woman—shameless coquette—mean, selfish, cruel, plotting fiend! her name was Jane Vaughan; there is neither hero nor heroine in my tale, dear Anne, only a head-strong, foolish boy, and a heartless, selfish woman. Oh, how I hate her now, with an intensity equalling, if not surpassing, the love



wherewith I once loved her. If she were dying on those stones, I would spurn her with my foot. If she knelt at my feet for forgiveness, I could find it in my heart to smite her on the mouth."

"Who is impetuous now?" she asked, smiling, and yet half-frightened at his violence.

"Impetuous, rather say murderous, frantic, when I talk of Jane Vaughan; you shall judge if I have reason. Just six years ago I was of age. I had a strong yearning after love and affection; it was denied me at home. My step-mother always hated me. God only knows why; shall I ever know the cause of this mysterious antipathy? Brothers and sisters were all set against me by her influence. My father had no love for any person, at least he never showed it. I had seen little of the world at that time. My father had let his town house. I had been to London only twice in my life. I went to Cambridge to read for a prize, and take my degree. My

father paid for that. I was there one term. Of course, as the heir of a fine property, and a time-honoured name, I was courted and noticed at Cambridge. My allowance was pitiful. I got into debt. My father has never forgiven this, he is perpetually alluding to it, and every tale Mrs. Aubrey carries to him he believes, 'because I ran him up a bill of two hundred pounds at college. I was invited to spend the long vacation at the house of a certain Henry Vaughan, son of Sir E. Vaughan, between whom and myself a friendship was struck up, which has lasted to this day. Henry Vaughan said, laughing, as we took our places on the London mail: 'Mind you don't fall in love with my cousin Jane Vaughan. My dear fellow, she is an awful flirt, and she has not sixpence in the world.' Well, I saw her that very night for the first time, dressed in French blue silk, with silver ornaments, at the Baronet's dining-table, this penniless Jane Vaughan. To say I loved her does not express one half of the sensation I

experienced. I don't believe women can tell the depth, and strength, and might of a man's love—perhaps theirs is more self-sacrificing, patient, long-suffering, enduring—we read of such things. I speak from experience. She was the orphan daughter of the Baronet's spendthrift brother, a creature of his bounty. Her cousins the Miss Vaughans were allowed only privileges equal with Jane; even her allowance for dress was as much as her rich cousins; but the old man gave her to understand that she would have no marriage portion, he used to tell her that her fair face must win her a husband. His daughters were short, dark, plain creatures, heavy and stupid besides, but kind and honest, I believe."

"And Jane?"

"You are much prettier than she was!"

"Do you mean me?"

"Yes, much prettier. Imagine a woman of one and twenty (she was just my age), rather tall, and with an exquisite full voluptuous figure, that was perfection in its

way ; but her face was not beautiful ; light yellowish hair, which I in my enthusiasm called golden, abundant and arranged like a coronet on her small well-shaped head, a nose which some people considered too arched and prominent to be feminine, a wide mouth, but with teeth of dazzling whiteness ; after all, her complexion was her chief charm—fair as alabaster, and with a bloom like a peach on her softly rounded cheeks. What colour do you suppose her eyes were ?”

“ Blue,” Anne answered, “ with her light coloured hair, or perhaps a bright soft hazel.”

“ Green, real unmistakeable green, but bright and soft notwithstanding. Such was Jane Vaughan. I cannot say in what lay the fascination of her manner ; enthralling it was most certainly, yet she did not seem to take much pains to please. She was quiet, dignified, graceful, charming. She spoke little, but what she said was well chosen. She sang divinely. I loved her to madness almost at first sight ; she knew it perfectly, and received

it calmly as her right. And when with the hot-brained eagerness of youth I knelt at her feet, two days after my arrival, and breathed forth my passion in words of fire, she listened like a statue, betraying neither emotion, pleasure, displeasure, nor surprise, and she asked me to seat myself, and talk reasonably, in the tone of a woman who's selling you gloves and bonbons, and wishes to know how much you will bid. I told her of my great inheritance, but that I possessed nothing at present.

“‘Do you know,’ she asked, ‘that I am penniless?’

“‘Yes! but I am the more delighted at that, most divine Jane; I shall have more than enough for both, and your relations will make you some reasonable allowance befitting your station in the interim.’ I did not tell her my father was a miser—why should I at such a moment? She engaged herself to me then and there. I kissed her hand with the chivalrous feeling of a knight of old. She was

always like an icicle towards me. She had none of the quick pulses, nor warm blood of youth, and her very indifference inflamed my passion to the highest degree. When my visit was over, and I returned to my home, I used to sit up the whole of the nights writing her long letters, in which I poured out my whole soul. My passion was like a consuming fire; it seemed to dry up the heart it preyed on. I was dead to all other feelings; I lived but for Jane Vaughan." He paused, took off his cap, and let the breeze fan his brow; he was pale from excitement, which the remembrance of his love awakened.

"Oh, to have been thus loved by Robert;" the thought was delirium of bliss, and this woman had despised, rejected his love.

Anne felt again how much she hated her.

"Sir Edward Vaughan wrote to my father to know what provision he would make for his son, in case he married his niece. I do not know what answer my father would have returned if left to himself; he asked counsel of

my step-mother, who instantly resolved to break off the match. Can you guess why?"

"To distress and torment you."

"Partly, but Mrs. Aubrey has always resolved to prevent my marriage with any one or at any time. I read her deep laid schemes, and I will help you to do the like. If I die childless or unmarried before my father, her idol George will inherit the lands and wealth of Yanly. My step-mother has so willed that I shall die—I am resolved to thwart that strong will."

"Die! your health is perfect yet."

"There are more ways of dying than one; strong men, young men, brave men, die daily."

"Yes, fighting in the cause of their country, but you are not a soldier?"

"I repeat that my step-mother has resolved that I shall die childless, and that George shall be master of the lands at Yanly. I am resolved to thwart that will. Well, to return to my love tale. My step-mother persuaded my father, over whom she has still

much influence, to refuse to increase my allowance; this tallied with his own mean, miserly wishes; then, all unknown to me, she went herself to Town and sought out Jane. She laid before her my poverty-stricken state. She found that would not answer. Jane was too deep plotting a woman to give up the chance of such a property as mine would be, without a struggle. She would have clung to me through a ten years' engagement, I verily believe, if no better chance had offered, then Mrs. Aubrey whispered to her a dark, dark hint, which perhaps, if I breathed to you, *you* even might turn from Robert Aubrey with abhorrence."

"I, oh, no! whatever it may be, though its horror blanched my cheeks, and stole my senses away, I would never turn from you." She paused, for she had spoken involuntarily, and was frightened at her own words.

Robert seized her hand and carried it to his lips, saying:

"God bless you! I believe you, still I



will not breathe to you this dark saying, it may be an idle superstition—I pray God it may. I will say this much though, if it were true, I should be an outcast from my own patrimony—I should be dead to this world's pleasures—and if I had no son, George would own the lands of Yanly.”

“What in Heaven’s name do you mean?”

“Do not seek to know. Suffice it to say, my step-mother gained her object when she breathed this secret to Jane Vaughan. My letters were returned, with just a cold note of dismissal, from the archfiend Jane. It was a wild, wet evening in autumn: the wind shook the trees from their very roots, and tossed their branches wildly about; showers of brown and yellow leaves came driving down the pathway, by the side of my own sitting room, which, you know, opens upon part of the shrubbery. I had a small fire lighted, and I sat close to it poring over Jane’s letters, trying to extract some comfort from their cold contents, some chance word of

love or endearment—not one in all the neatly written pages, from the formal ‘dear Robert’ at the commencement, to the ‘yours truly’ at the foot. That woman maddened me by her coldness and impenetrable reserve, she never once admitted that she loved me. I never kissed her in my life—I never dared. Well, I walked to the glass door of my room, and moodily watched the heaps of yellow leaves shining with wet, or listened to the sougling of the wind, which every moment rose to a loud gust and seemed to go howling round the old manor like one in grief or madness, when the postman’s horn sounded across the ground. I never now hear that sound without a whitening cheek and a throbbing heart. The letters were brought to me—a large packet and a small note; the packet I tore open—my own letters! mine own letters! which might have been traced in my heart’s best blood for the devotion they breathed, and the adoration they expressed. Oh! to have wasted the best, warmest feelings of youth—

the love which can never be given twice—on a worthless woman, a senseless painted piece of Eve's flesh, is humiliating, degrading—pity me, Anne, pity the passionate boy, with his strong suffering man's heart, who tore those letters to atoms in his fury, and trampled them to powder under his feet—do you pity me ?”

“ From my soul ; go on—this note.”

“ I can repeat its contents to you, they are burnt into my heart with a hot iron, that iron which has entered into my soul and embittered my existence. ‘Miss Vaughan, in consequence of communications received from Mrs. Aubrey, and which lead her to infer that there is no prospect save a life of privation for many years should her engagement with Mr. Robert Aubrey be carried out, has resolved to dissolve the connection so far as she is concerned ; she is surprised that Mr. Aubrey did not state his real position with more frankness ; had he done so, much annoyance might have been spared to all parties con-

cerned. She takes this opportunity of returning Mr. Aubrey's letters, and she will feel obliged if, at his earliest convenience, he will kindly return hers.—Grosvenor place, Oct. 9th.' I was frantic, but I resolved to go at once to Town and seek out Jane, throw myself at her feet, and tell her life would be worthless without her. I thought to move this woman to pity. What do you think of your hero now, Miss Cave? Where was my self-respect—where my manly dignity when I thus degraded myself yet more in the eyes of this worthless jade?"

"You had scarcely loved had you done otherwise."

"You reason like a woman; you cannot tell the pride of a man's heart, a man like me, sprung from the Aubrey stock, and with the proud blood of the Haughtons mingling in my veins. I left Yanly Manor that wet wild night. I rode to Felton and remained at the inn until morning; then I started by the mail and reached London in two nights, got a

bath, dressed, presented myself at Grosvenor place, and asked for Miss Vaughan. 'Not at home, sir,' said the lacquey. 'You lie,' I said, furiously, 'she is here.' Mark well my degradation, I, Robert Aubrey, to condescend to bandy words with a lacquey. 'She is here,' I added, forcing a sovereign into the fellow's palm, 'send her to me in the library, and I will pay you double.' He did so, and Jane entered, believing her uncle had sent for her. She was dressed in white silk, with gold brooch and massive gold chain and bracelets, in full dinner costume, calm and lofty as of old. 'Jane, Jane,' I said wildly, 'what do you mean by this cruelty? I have talent, I will work to support you until my father's death. Do not spurn from you a love which is long as eternity,' and I, Robert Aubrey, knelt at her feet in abject voluntary humiliation. She looked at me with a curious smile of mingled contempt and derision and said, 'You give yourself unnecessary trouble, Mr. Aubrey, what I have written I have written,' and she moved to-

wards the door. I intercepted her and she turned towards the bell. 'You do not treat me with common justice, Miss Vaughan,' I said angrily. 'You forget I am your equal—in birth at least—remember I am a gentleman.' 'Do not forget that interesting fact yourself,' she said, laughing scornfully, 'and leave the house, or,' and here she betrayed my step-mother's communication, 'or I shall think what your mother says is true.' "

"What did she mean?"

"Never mind ; I turned upon her instantly, thank God for it, calm, stately, frozen for the time as herself. 'You think there is some danger of not being the lady of Yanly Manor, after all, and in case of the failure of heirs male, you would have made a bad speculation ; this has induced you to break off your engagement. I commend your prudence, and rejoice at it also, since it shows me what a lucky escape I have had from the snares of a penniless fortune hunter.' I touched her there ; she was white with anger, and without

giving me time to escape, she stepped into the passage, saying to my friend, the lacquey, whom we encountered—

“ ‘ Show this person out, and never admit him again to this house.’ ”

“ I left, and have never seen Jane Vaughan since. She is now the Countess de Maine.”

“ How did she manage that ? ”

“ I can scarcely tell you ; I suppose she fascinated the Count by some means, although it could not have been with him a first passion, as in my case, since he was a man forty years of age, and a widower, rich, of course. It is a French title, with estates of some worth. He has two sons by his former wife, and one daughter by his second.”

“ Then she has not won such a great prize, after all ? ”

“ She has unbounded influence over this man, and yet report speaks not sweetly of her constancy as a wife. She is still a syren who entraps affections, and breaks hearts as ruthlessly as of yore, if rumour speaks true. I

am not the only unwary youth whose life she has embittered."

He turned towards Anne Cave with a glowing cheek, when he heard her say—

"Wretch!"

"Do you hate her?"

"With all my strength and soul."

"You are one of Dr. Johnson's good haters, so am I towards this woman, but to a far more violent degree than the good Doctor ever dreamt of. But you, who have never seen her, must only hate her on trust. I must now tell you in as few words as possible what my after life was up to this present time. My step-mother, knowing well my temperament, had all fears of marriage on my part laid aside for some years. She well knew that the name of woman would be hateful to me for some time to come. I, of course, presented myself before her, and furious to excess were the reproaches, curses, and menaces I hurled at her; she answered me with her



cold sneering smile, and insolent sarcasm ; and now came the bitter trial, the struggle of a proud wounded heart with a love strong as death, for think not that the hatred I now feel for Jane was the growth of a day or even of a year. No, no, cold as she had been, I had gentle memories of those long summer weeks I had passed under the same roof with her in London, drives in the park, walks *tête-à-tête*, balls, where I had led her off triumphantly as my partner, while she had been uniformly gentle, cold, and fascinating. I thought of all my life's dream crushed, of the years of my youth that must pass over before the sting would lose its poison, and I should be again at rest. Oh ! those weary, weary months of honest striving against my love, the wild longing which came upon me sometimes in the night season to seek her presence once more at all risks, and to destroy myself before her eyes. Was she still pitiless ? My stronger sense, my better nature held me back from the committal of such sin and folly, but

oh ! the times I have prayed till I was hoarse, for death in the dead of night. When the winter winds were howling round the house, when the rain descended and beat against the windows, while the rest of the household slept, I, Robert, was on my knees crying loudly, 'my trouble is greater than I can bear ; oh ! Lord, take me from this life.' "

" You did wrong to quarrel with your life."

" Wrong, and blasphemous, and weak, was that prayer. Life, the gift of God, is given for a purpose ! To do good honestly in one's generation is everybody's duty ; to strike out a path for one's self, if no path has been marked ; to follow that path honestly, striving, cheerfully, praying for God's blessing on his labours, is man's duty, his privilege ! Because one false woman had deceived me, I had no right to despise the life which is the breath of His nostrils. You see I talk properly—how do I act ? I know my duty—do I follow it ? You cannot tell me ; I can answer myself, no, no, no, I fall far short ; I


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am strong and earnest in the cause of my own passions and self-will ; weak and faltering in the cause of my duty both to God and to man. But you see I was so young ; I had loved so deeply ; I had been deceived so woefully."

" Were you all this time at Yanly Manor ?"

" Yes ; I did not feel capable of moving in the world ; I shunned all society. I spent my days in reading and writing in my own room, or in riding recklessly about the most solitary places. Sometimes I have been down this lane at eight o'clock on a December morning, when it was knee-deep in snow, and these branches, which now interlace their green boughs, were bare of leaves, but stiff with shining frost-work ; when, as the sun rose red and lowering, the thick blinding snow continued to fall, threatening to block up the way, and prevent my return ; I would keep on, careless of all, for miles and miles, and perhaps not return home till evening, jaded and worn, wet, weary, and fainting ; and once

when I thus returned, I paced my room all night without taking food, without changing my wet and clinging garments. I was a fool in the worst sense ; were I to tell this tale to any of my present friends, they would laugh me to scorn, they would think I wished to impose on their credulity. Yet most people have experienced something of this feeling once in their lives. But it is the custom to tell the tale of one's first love as a joke, a subject for sneers and laughter. We are ashamed, men especially, of having loved to such excess ; perhaps few men ever loved or suffered as I did. I hope so, for their sakes. My step-mother rejoiced at all this, not only for malice sake ; but at last I received a pressing invite from Harry Vaughan, Jane's cousin, to spend some weeks with him in town ; he always despised and detested her, and it is through him that I have heard news of Jane, from time to time. Harry had chosen a profession in which he has since risen to the greatest eminence, he was then in chambers



reading for the 'bar.' I went to visit him, and plunged instantly into all the dissipation London afforded. I did this as recklessly as I had ridden through the snow on a December day, or paced my room all night, hungry and weary, without rest or food. As in the first stage of my folly I had punished my flesh to deaden the torture of my spirit, so now I went to the other extreme—I gambled, I drank, I did worse—I stained my life with sin, and impurity of a gross and sensual nature, from the very thought of which my inmost soul revolts to this day. I think I was no worse than most other young men of my acquaintance; this I offer as no excuse, but only to show you that you need not reckon me lower in the social scale than most other men. This is the ground my step-mother goes on when she tells people that I am a gambler and drunkard, a libertine; all these I was for the space of eight months; but believe me, Anne, it was against my nature; I found no delight in these ways. I

was not in debt, for I had gambled successfully, and lived by it. Are you shocked? Remember that my father only allowed me seventy pounds a year, and that my associates were gentlemen, and noblemen's sons, of large fortunes, who had liberal allowances, and yet who gambled."

"Did you go into the great world?"

"Do you mean Almack's, and the balls and *conversations*, where I should have perhaps met the Countess de Maine, who was flaunting it in London that season? No, not once; I eschewed all female society, but that of the lowest grade. I think it was the feeling of degradation that guilt always engenders that made me take so violent a hatred to Jane Vaughan, as the cause of my inward humiliation. I went abroad with a friend, and ever since have led a careless but not a guilty life. I never drink, I mix only with those of both sexes whom I consider respectable in a moral point of view. I am sometimes in London, occasionally in Paris,

and Vienna, oftener at Yanly Manor. For Jane Vaughan I have not one lingering regard, except it is to see her punished, a thirst for revenge. You know how much Mrs. Aubrey hates and vilifies me; that, my father's miserliness, and the superstitious dread which you shall learn someday, are my real trials. I am now going to Italy with a secretaryship of three hundred a year, the strong resolution to work hard, not to gamble, to cleave to that which is right, and to marry a wife so soon as opportunity offers, so that, in case of my step-mother's wishes being fulfilled, there may be other heirs to Yanly. Anne Cave, can you help me to find a wife?" He looked at her with a bright, joyous smile; all the storm seemed to have cleared from his face, leaving only sunshine.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, do you know any young, pretty, gentle girl, sensible and loving, who would be willing to take Robert Aubrey as he is, for


sheer love of him, even with the chance of present poverty, and an uncertain future?"

Anne essayed to speak, but she could not find the power; her words died away in a voiceless murmur.

Robert continued: "Lately my step-mother has had great fear of this catastrophe; she has seen the complete cure that time, change, and the natural reaction of youthful spirits have brought about; so far her fears have been groundless. I have inspected almost every fair face that came in my way.

'My loveless eye unmoved may gaze on thee,  
And safely view thy ripening beauties shine,'

sings Byron. Well, I have gazed on many beauties ripening and ripened in France. I have chatted with the bright eyed grissette, a piquante pretty grace itself, and I have danced with the gay belles of the Tuilleries in the court balls of the restored Bourbon. In Germany I led a life of dreaming, smoking, and idleness. I was very happy there. I





had with me a highly valued friend, who I will introduce to you one day. We visited all the Rhine cities, and listened to all the legends we could hear of. Among the really handsome women of that land, fair-haired, blooming, fine-featured, I never saw one who could make my heart beat faster, not even among the court beauties in any of the Ducal States. In England I have not lately mixed much with ladies of rank and fashion, except at an occasional county ball, or during a fortnight's visit at the house of some friends in the country, but, lovely as are our country women, not one has touched me yet. I have been sought for my fortune, by manœuvring mothers and ambitious daughters; perhaps I may have been in one or two instances loved for my own sake; I don't know; I never sought to learn. I have had a smile for all—a heart for none."

"Yet you wish to marry?"

"Yes; to defeat Mrs. Aubrey's designs; to keep George out of the lands and wealth."

"And for no other reason?"

"Oh, it would be very sweet to have a loving, faithful wife, fair, and young and good, and pure; unselfish, clinging, yielding."

"And yet you would not love such a one?"

"She would teach me to love her; it would be like the pure bright light of the moon, succeeding to the fierce heat of the sun, so she should shed a calm influence over my life, soothing my stormy passions to rest, gilding all the roughness on life's pathway, shedding a hallowed glow over all things connected with me. Shall I describe her to you?"

"Yes."

"She should have dark soft eyes, full of love and tenderness, yet flashing anon, with a beautiful indignation, at a tale of wrong or injustice; she should be pale and yet with a skin so clear that the slightest emotion should call the rich blood to her cheeks; she should be all that I have said, and more, she should love me fondly, even when she knew my secret, and she should be called Anne Cave."

"You mock me cruelly!"

"Not so; I tell you frankly that it is because I feel convinced you really love me, that I make you the offer of my hand in marriage."

"Not of your heart?"

"No, not in the sense you would wish. I can offer respect, tenderness, affection, preference, but the feeling called love is dead in Robert Aubrey; perchance it only sleeps; if so, will you be the one to awaken it?"

"Mr. Aubrey, you do not consider what you are doing; an hour ago you had not dreamed of this; you have chosen to suppose I love you, and so, in a fit of hasty resolve you speak to me solemn, sacred, serious words, which will have an influence over all my future life, if I take them in their fullest sense. You do not—you cannot want to marry a girl whom you confess you do not love, and who is infinitely beneath you in the social scale. You speak of the Aubrey stock with pride, and of the haughty race of Haughton, whose blood mingles in your veins

from the mother's side. My father was a country rector, the son of a manufacturer; my mother is Scotch, well educated, as are most of that people, but she almost starves on a scanty pittance, and, worse than all, she was a draper's daughter, in the town of Perth."

"You have a strange pride in telling me these things, with that flushing face and rapid utterance. How is it you have so little north country accent with your northern extraction."

"I was at five years old sent away to be educated for a governess, and they took especial care of our accent."

"I think I heard to the clergy daughters' school, was it not?"

"Yes."

"How did you like that?"

"There was not much to like or enjoy there; hard fare, rough discipline, few of the pleasures of childhood were provided for the little beings who were fed and taught there,

at a low price, but I dare say it was as much as they could afford to give; besides, that hardship and privations has fitted me well for the difficulties I may hereinafter meet with."

"You had your holidays?"

"Yes, those were pleasant. I had more freedom. Yes, I enjoyed my holidays, especially in the summer time. I used to take a favourite book of stories from history, or fairy tales, and seek a place where, sheltered by the clumps of beech and alder trees, I could listen to the river rushing rapidly over its rough stones, and sometimes I would wander about all the June day through, gathering wild flowers in the wood that skirts our village."

"You love your mother?"

"Yes."


"Yet that is a faint yes. You are not enthusiastically fond of her."

"I am not fond, because she has been for a mother uniformly cold to me; if it were her nature only, I should not care, but to my brother she is warm, kind, loving——"

“Do you know, Anne Cave, that there is a marvellous charm about your truthfulness, and freshness and freedom from all that is considered fashionable and proper in young ladies; do not be shocked at the term; you are far more pure minded than they are with it all. I am not sure whether I should not learn to love you as fondly as your little romantic heart could desire in a short time——”

Anne's heart throbbed with pleasure at those words, but she did not speak.

“You think me a queer fellow,” he went on, “to talk to you thus, and to open my heart so freely for your inspection, but I know so well your noble nature. I have watched you so closely, I think of you so highly, that I scruple not again to offer you my hand, not to marry at present, but say in a year's time, when I perhaps shall have a couple of hundred pounds to spare, so that you may not want little necessary comforts. I shall still keep my secretaryship, I hope, and shall be



much from home, but when I return it will be home, there will be a bright smile and a bright fire to welcome me."

"And what will become of the proud Haughton blood, and the great Aubrey stock?"

"Confound the Haughton blood; understand me once for all that I have family and fortune enough for us both. I want you because you are good, and because you love me——"

"How can you be so sure of that?"

"I have suspected it long, but yesterday it became confirmation strong, when you could not find your voice to speak, and turned so red and pale in Nelly's cottage. To-day your enthusiasm in my cause, your forgetfulness of self, your bright loving-eye told the rest."


"Yet you tell me that I acted imprudently, impetuously, impulsively, and that I should have gone home with your step-mother."

"What a memory you have; but I still wish you had, for your own sake, for should she turn you away it will be awkward and disagreeable. Don't look sad; you are imprudent, impulsive, impetuous, but you are unselfish, noble-hearted, generous; had you been cool, proper, prudent, I should not have loved you."

"You do not love me."

"I should not have entertained affection for you. I should not have asked you to be my wife, but now, in truth and earnestness, I ask you again to bind yourself to me by a solemn promise. Do not hold me off. You love me; confess it, Anne?"

"What are my promises worth," Anne answered "I promised myself yesterday that I would be cold and indifferent to you, that you should find me icy, hard, frozen. I meet you in Nelly's cottage. I show you my inmost feelings. To-day I defend you before witnesses, and I suppose make a fool of my-





self in consequence. I promised Mrs. Aubrey to avoid all private conversations with you, and look at us now."

Robert laughed. "There is one reason for the breaking of each of these promises, your love for me. Make another promise, and that same love shall help you to keep it."

"Will it be honourable towards Mr. Harvey Aubrey and his wife?"

He interrupted her. "Are they, is she to come for ever between me and happiness? Does she deserve a moment's consideration from me?"

"From you, perhaps not; but she has been very kind to me."

"So kind that you beg to decline all further advances from me; very well, Miss Cave." He spoke pettishly, yet coldly, and she knew not what to say, much as she loved him. She could not divest herself of the notion that there would be something dishonourable, clandestine, and mean, in thus engaging her-

self to this young man after the promises his step-mother had wrung from her, and the bounty she had showered on her; besides, his way of expressing himself was so passionless, businesslike, and unloverlike, that she felt, strange to say, scarcely flattered at the offer he had made her, although she could have cheerfully laid down her life to serve him. What girl of nineteen could bear to be told by the man she loved, that he had no love for her, but wished to marry her notwithstanding? Anne began to think, with something akin to jealousy, of the yellow haired Jane Countess de Maine, who had called up a feeling so different to the cool kind of friendship she had inspired, and it was in sulky silence on both sides that they entered the precincts of Yanly Manor, and approached the park by a side path. Not a word was spoken on either side as he lifted her from the horse, as they neared the stables, but she turned to him before entering the house, saying—

"Good morning, Mr. Aubrey, you are not offended with me." He answered, with cold politeness.

So Anne Cave entered the house the back way. On the staircase she met Christine, and as she attempted to pass, she stopped her with, "Pardon, Mademoiselle, I have packed up your things; you are dismissed; Mrs. Aubrey has commissioned me to say that you can have the little phaeton, if you like to go to Felton."


"Dismissed?"

"Yes, Mees Cave."

"Christine, you did wrong to pack up my boxes; you should have left them for me; there was surely no such hurry, but that you might have allowed me to arrange my own things."

"Does Mademoiselle think I have taken any of her pretty things?" asked Christine, politely.

"I have no pretty things; you know well that my wardrobe is far simpler than your



own. I have neither jewellery, perfumery, nor silk dresses—nothing to tempt a person with such good taste as yourself, Christine.”

“Mademoiselle insinuates that it is good taste, not good principles, which will prevent me from purloining from the boxes of Mademoiselle.”

“I insinuate nothing; I only say that you should not have packed up my boxes, Christine; that you had no right to touch my things.”

“Mademoiselle is very firm and sensible; there is a candour that is charming, about Mademoiselle.”


“Have you packed up my desk, Christine?”

“Yes, Miss Cave.”

“Then I shall be forced to unlock that box again, as I have no money except what is contained in my desk.”

“Mees Cave, you can unpack at the inn. Madame desires you to leave the house at once.”

“Then have my boxes brought down at



once, if you please," said Anne Cave, coldly, but her heart felt bursting.


"The boxes of Mademoiselle are already in the hall."

Anne ran down stairs without responding, and there, in the dear old hall, she found her two small, unpretending boxes looking so tiny in the vast old place. She sat down on one of them, and struggled with the tears that would force themselves into her eyes. One thing she felt, that she had partly deserved this severe treatment, this contemptuous expulsion from the house of Aubrey; but she would not let Christine see her weep, for she stood with a smile on her withered detestable little visage, the quintessence of all that was at once false, fawning, cunning, and insulting.

"Will Mees Cave have the pony phaeton?"

"No; but if you will send these boxes down to the Pigeon, I will walk on there myself."

Anne would have no favour now at Mrs. Aubrey's hand, not even the benefit of a



drive to the nearest post town. After all, she had been too precipitate, too severe; Anne Cave had not transgressed any moral law; in fact, she had striven to keep to the letter of the promise she had made her. She had, as Robert said, been imprudent, that was all. She wished she was like other young women of her station—but then Robert would not have loved her; pah! he did not love her. Anne rose, calm enough to outward seeming.


“Will you have the goodness to ask John to bring down my boxes to the Pigeon, on a truck?”

“Certainly; and here are the keys of Mademoiselle.”

She took them from her with a slight nod, and then she walked down the hall, the stones of which struck cold to her feet, and the echo of her steps ran mournfully round the vaulted roof; at the door she paused; where was Elsie? must she leave without one adieu from the frank, loving, rosy child; she did not ask for her; Anne's heart told her that

she was kept a prisoner in the chamber of her mother. So she walked across the park in the bright light of the afternoon sun ; the after-crop of grass velvet, emerald green, delicious to the feet, she trod with firm step, her head bent, her heart heavy ; so this was the end of her career as a governess, for of course without Mrs. Aubrey's recommendation, she could never obtain another situation, and this woman so obstinate, bigotted, un-pitying, would never forgive her temerity and disobedience. The long ride with Robert was unpardonable in itself.

No, she must make up her mind to return home, encounter the stern reproaches of her mother, and what then ? Robert—would he follow her to the inn, would he renew his offer, would he stand her friend ? she knew not ; she had begun to fancy him wayward in his words ; she had no deep hold on his affections ; had she lost him by her love of principle, and love to do what was right ? “ Oh ! it is a bitter, bitter world ! ” she cried aloud,



as she turned under the shade of the thick trees which grew down the slope leading to the turnpike road.

“A bitter world ! Robert, Robert, if it had not been for you I might have been at this moment calm, happy, respected, instead of being cast forth from this house like a dog, disgraced, despised, despairing ;” then she looked round her with a vain longing, hoping to see his noble form approaching, listening for kind words from lips which she might never perchance hear words from again, longing for his circling arm and warm embrace, regretting that she had been so cold to him ; yet, with it all, there was one sweet voice, one comfort within her breast, which soothed her, ‘saying you have done right, Anne Cave, you have kept your promise, though you are driven forth and misjudged ; you have acted nobly, faithfully, truly ; had you listened to his honied words, were you bound to him now by the tender vow he would have extracted from you, you would despise your-



self. True, when you gave that promise, you thought you were fencing yourself round with a strong defence against what you believed to be an unrequited attachment; you dreamed not that the word marriage would ever be whispered by those loved lips; you deemed not that Robert Aubrey would woo you with the divine title of wife, to come to his arms, and to rule over his home, else had you refused your pledge to the step-mother; still, you need fear no self-reproach, if you suffer, it is in a right cause, fear not, go on, happiness shall dawn again upon you.' She went on even cheerfully after this train of thought, and by the time she stood in front of the gabled-ended Pigeon, she was alive most strongly to one sensation, which, for the time, had put all other considerations to flight—she had not tasted food since morning, she had spent the whole day in the air, and was ravenously hungry.

Anne entered the passage, she peered into the bar, there sat, engaged with a young person

from Felton, a dressmaker, Mrs. Plumpton, the fattest and rosiest of landladies. She was a Southener. Anne knew her by sight, her pew was in front of the Aubrey's, in Yanly church, and she had often watched her all sermon time, when she sat silently with Elsie, listening, or attempting to listen, to the discourse of the deaf old vicar, who spoke so low that half of his sermon was lost. Anne knew Mrs. Plumpton's red face by heart; she had watched it, Sunday after Sunday, beneath the gay yellow bonnet that surrounded it; she knew its expression of mingled good-humour and shrewdness, but she had never spoken to her in her life. She rose respectfully:

"Good morning, Miss—afternoon, I should say."

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Plumpton. Have you a chaise to spare that you could let me have. I want to go to Felton this afternoon, and my boxes will be here presently."

"Your boxes, Miss?" with a glance of surprise.

"Yes, Mrs. Plumpton; and can you let me have something to eat, for I am very hungry?"

Curiosity, and the intense love of news, and gossip, peculiar to all Englishwomen in villages and small country towns, lighted up the grey eyes, and enthroned themselves on the dimpled cheeks and double chin, and Mrs. Plumpton ejaculated, "hungry, Miss?"

"Very; have you no cold meat?"

"There are two fowls roasting for a gentleman from Felton, Mr. Wild, the lawyer; you can have part of one, and some peas, and a bit of bacon."

The bare mention of these eatables increased Anne Cave's appetite, and she exclaimed, "Do make haste; I am famished, Mrs. Plumpton."

Be it remembered, Anne had ten pounds untouched in her desk; this seemed to her a large sum, for she had never owned five pounds in her life, and she thought she was justified in ordering a carriage and a dinner on the strength of it.

Mrs. Plumpton bustled about immediately. Two handmaidens graced the precincts of the Pigeon, but neither Rachel nor Mary were permitted to wait on Miss Cave, for Mrs. Plumpton was too anxious to learn the cause of her leaving the Manor, and too hopeful that she would repose confidence in her ample bosom; so having conducted her to a pretty back parlour, looking out on the bowling green, and covered with the gaudiest of carpets, she proceeded to lay a snow-white cloth on the black oak table, and to arrange knives and forks of brilliant mien for her use.


"I like always to see young people with a good happotite, Miss."

"Yes, it is a sign of health."

"You have been very ill, Miss, I hear; I suppose you are going for a change?"

"No, I am quite restored; I am going for good."

"Place don't suit; Mrs. Aubrey is proud; don't you find her so, Miss?"



"To me she has been very kind."


"Ah, well, Miss, I suppose Miss Elsie is hard to manage for a young thing like you; so wild and rude—such a tom-boy. I shouldn't like to see my Ellen Jane climb and tear about as Miss Elsie does."

"Elsie is a darling child, Mrs. Plumpton—noble, kind, affectionate—quite a lady at heart."

"Well, I'm surprised myself, at your leaving such a nice place," said the landlady, a little pertly, and losing all patience.

"Mrs. Plumpton—when my boxes come, may I have them in here; I want to open one of them to get at my money."

"Yes;" and she bustled out to hurry on the dinner, perhaps hoping that the comfortable meal would touch Anne's heart, and loosen the strings of her tongue. In it came, smoking hot, the delicious roast fowl, country fed ham, boiled to a turn, and dish of heavenly green peas—as Anne's brother Arthur, when



a little boy, used to designate profanely his favourite vegetable.

Anne was in love, and romantic, in a strange unfriended state, with a future which looked dark enough before her, but she was hungry and sinking for want of food. She sat down to the table and ate almost voraciously.

Mrs. Plumpton came in smiling; "What will you take to drink, Miss?"

"Toast-and-water, please."

"La, Miss, we have such beautiful ale as can't possibly harm you."

"No, thank you—toast-and-water—the doctor has ordered me to touch nothing stronger for a month."

It was brought her, with a plateful of cold apple tart, which she had not ordered, but which Mrs. Plumpton pressed her to partake of. At length, refreshed, she quitted the table, and went to seat herself in the embrasure of the window.

"Can I have a phaeton, Mrs. Plumpton?"

"Yes, Miss."

"What will be the charge to Felton?"

"Fourteen shillings, Miss."

"What a price," she mentally ejaculated.

"It's rather sudden, Miss, your leaving Yanly Manor, isn't it?"

"Surprisingly sudden."

Mrs. Plumpton worked up to a pitch of excessive curiosity. Mrs. Plumpton hazarded the following remark—

"I shouldn't wonder, now, that foreign woman Christine," which she literally pronounced tine, "have been a telling stories of you to Madame."

Anne Cave replied—

"I don't think she has; I imagine that Christine has only told the truth about me."

"Do you like her, Miss?"

"Not at all. I think she is a spiteful mischievous person."

"That's just what I say," cried mine

hostess, triumphantly; "and she 'ave been telling tales of you."

"I believe she has only told the truth of me."

Flesh and blood could stand it no longer, and approaching Anne, closely, Mrs. Plumpton said—

"Why are you leaving the Court, Miss? I understood you was much thought of there."

"Mrs. Plumpton, if I had intended to tell you I should have taken the hint before."

"You won't tell?"

"Oh, no."

"I can guess, my pretty maid, it's some courting you've been up to with Master Bob. Be careful of him, child, he is a sad, wild fellow."

"How do you know that, Mrs. Plumpton?"

"Wasn't it the talk of the place some years ago, when he was so wild in town, and now he can't let the girls alone."

"What girls?"



"Why, Farmer Eastdom's daughter up at the Cherrywoods farm, they say he've ruined her."

Anne Cave replied, warmly—

"He has not! I saw them to-day face to face, and Amy Eastdom said, before her mother and his step-mother, that she had never seen Robert Aubrey before in her life; some villain must have taken the name and imposed upon the dear innocent girl."

"Well for certain, I am glad to hear it, but he is a wild slip, Miss, be certain of it."

"I do not choose to believe it."

"Bless you, Miss, when my Ellen Jane comes to be grown up, I wouldn't trust her five minutes with him."

"Quite right to look after your Ellen Jane; I trust she will come up to your proudest expectations; and now, Mrs. Plumpton, will you see if my boxes are come, please?"

She bustled out; Anne heard a querulous voice in the passage, and almost immediately there entered, with the full blaze of the sun-

set illuminating the dusky brown coat and withered face, Mr. Harvey Aubrey, attorney at law. She rose, and advanced towards him.

"My dear young lady," he said, clasping her hand in both of his; "what is all this I hear?"

"What is it you have heard, sir?"

"Why, dear me," he answered, seating himself on one of the hard inn chairs, "I hear a lot of I don't know what. Mrs. Aubrey is too punctilious, as I said before. Robert is in no position to marry for years, out of the allowance I can afford to make him; he can keep no wife; a bit of harmless flirtation with a nice girl like Miss Cave can do him no hurt; I should flirt with her myself if I was a young man."

"I did wrong," she said, "not to have gone home with Mrs. Aubrey, but I got so excited about Amy's affair at Cherrywoods that I could not leave the room. Mrs. Aubrey drove off without me, and I was obliged to ride home on Mr. Robert's horse, which he

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was kind enough to lead; I think that is all Mrs. Aubrey can lay to my charge."

"Why she does," he answered, "or she did, until I talked her out of it; she seems to think you have a design on Robert; as I say you may be married twice over before Bob can marry. He must wait till my death, and I don't see what is to prevent my living twenty years longer—I am not sixty-five yet."

A hard troublesome cough followed this little speech. She looked down on the drug-get with its pattern of red and yellow flowers, and when the fit was over, she said—

"I suppose you know, sir, that Mr. Robert is innocent of this charge of the Eastdoms'?"


"Yes, he has just been with me, poor lad; I am afraid his step-mother judges him too harshly; yet she is a clever, sensible woman; I have great respect for Mrs. Aubrey's judgment, but I think she is a little too prejudiced against Robert."

"A little," she answered, with quiet contempt.

"Yes, yes," said the attorney stupidly; "I think she is. Well now, Miss Cave, my dear girl, we must have you back at Yanly Manor, we must indeed. Elsie is crying herself ill at the thought of your leaving, so I told Mrs. Aubrey that you really were such a favourite of mine, that I must have you back! I have made her promise not to mention the subject to you. Bob will be off next week, and we shall have it all pleasant, so just put on your bonnet, and step up to the house—I've made it all right—you are quite forgiven."

"Does it not strike you, sir, that I may have something to forgive on my side? I was turned out like a dishonest kitchen girl, without warning or pity, and that French woman was given full license to insult me. I have thought it over, sir, and I will not return to Yanly Manor like a pardoned criminal, unless Mrs. Aubrey owns her mistake, and Christine is forbidden to insult me."

"Brave little spitfire," said the old man, chuckling, and patting her shoulder. "You



are a girl of spirit, I can see, and that's just what I like. If I were a widower, I would make you Mrs. Aubrey to-morrow. I would, upon my word."

"Would you, sir?"

"Yes, upon my soul I would, if you would have me; but perhaps you would not, eh?"

"No."

"Why not? Am I too old and too ugly, is that it?"

Somehow Anne did not like the turn the conversation had taken. She was disappointed in the fatherly interest the attorney had appeared to take in her. This badinage disgusted her a little. Perhaps she was fastidious. After all, it was but a very feeble old man, with one foot in the grave, who addressed her; and so, standing erect, firm, and fearless before him, she said—

"Sir, I have no father. In this country, I have no friend; it will injure me much to be turned adrift in the way Mrs. Aubrey wished. If she sees that she misjudged me, and will

send one of her servants down here with a few lines to that effect, I will return to the Manor. I will not, I dare not, unless. Your friendship, unaided by hers, would do me harm instead of good."

He rose from his chair.

"What a nice girl it is," he whimpered. "Well, my dear, I will go, and make her write the note; then you will come, won't you?"

"Yes, sir."


He went out of the door, and scarcely had his footsteps died away in the stone passage, before Robert, who had been waiting, as she afterwards learnt, in an adjoining room, entered the parlour.

"Anne."

"Robert," was all she said, but the tone was tender.

He approached her and took her hand.

"Anne, you have been turned away; no scruples need hold you now; will you engage yourself to me."



"Yes, dear, dearest Robert."

He left a kiss on her forehead, murmuring,  
"Through life you will be faithful, Anne,  
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"And to the death," she answered, passionately.

God knows how well she kept that oath.

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Robert has been gone two months. October has come with its yellow leaves and shortening days, the late apples hang yet upon the trees, the silvery mist rises from the deep green of the park, and the autumnal sun gilds it delicately as the day grows older, and chases it at length from the earth. Sometimes the sky darkens with leaden clouds, and for a whole day nature weeps for the departed summer. On such days, when lessons are over, Anne sat in the school-room with a favourite book, and Elsie sat by her. From time to time they looked out upon the thick grey clouds, the rugged lawn, the woods dressed

in their yellow livery, the distant hill tops looming through the mist, and they listened to the mournful gusts of wind that moaned among the gables, and tossed about the tree tops. On such days she thought of Robert, and his dismissal by Jane Vaughan. She thought of this more than she ought to have done. "What is Jane, Countess de Maine, to me?" she asked herself; "am I not Robert's affianced wife? Our engagement is secret, but it is no less firm. I hear from him often, and Nelly Stokes takes care of my letters."

Since Anne's reinstatement, at Mr. Harvey Aubrey's command, Mrs. Aubrey has been vastly polite, chillingly distant to her. She feels that she hates her. She is never summoned to her council chamber. Anne's salary has sunk again to its original twenty-five pounds for which she was engaged. She feels a sort of pleasure in outwitting this woman, so remorseless and so unjust. She longs for the day when she shall call Robert husband; Mrs. Aubrey meanwhile suspects nothing.



She deems that Robert has already forgotten the governess in the bright scenes amidst which he is wandering.


It is one wet, dark day that Anne is seated in the window, her book has fallen from her hand, and her eyes are resting on the yellow woods that are straining in the blast. She had received a letter from poor Amy the day before, dated Liverpool. She and her baby were about sailing for Quebec; her mother was there to see her off, and to put her under the care of the captain, who was her first cousin. The poor girl went cheerfully. She was glad to escape from the pale, reproachful face of her incensed mother. Strange to say, Anne Cave's sympathies were more with the stern, sad woman who would return in a few days to her sorrowful home, with its avenue of tall poplars swaying gloomily in the wind, who would sit down by her wood fire in the long winter nights that were approaching, with a desolate, isolated heart, and a hopeless, aimless life, than with

the childish, half unconscious being, who would, doubtless, in a new world, soon forget her wrongs, and perchance even yet become a happy wife, for with her youth, beauty, innocent nature, and rich uncle, many, doubtless, would be willing to look over the false step she had taken. Yes, Amy would marry, would probably love her honest husband better than she had ever loved her seducer, and would eventually be happy, for her nature was a loving one, and she was free from even the thought of guilt; but the poor parents, they would go with grey heads borne down in sorrow to the grave. She thought of them, and large tears gathered in her eyes, and fell thick and fast upon her book.

"Why do you cry, Miss Cave," asked Elsie.

Before she could reply they heard the prolonged notes of the postman's horn, and presently that functionary appeared.

The school room was in front of the house, the weather was tempestuous, and the rain



beat full in the face of the important personage who approached their window, nearly driven off his legs by the strong wind which was eddying in fearful gusts across the park.


Anne Cave opened the window and extended her hand for the letters in pity to the postman, who she knew dreaded having to wait the tardy coming of Mark, the deaf butler. He gave her a letter, touched his cap, and departed.

She shut the window, almost suffocated by the wind, then glanced at the direction, "Mrs. Aubrey, Yanly Manor, Westmoreland."

"Take it upstairs, Elsie, quick, it is for your mamma."

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George was coming home, and there were to accompany him the Honourable Charles Dalton and Captain Power of the Guards, the latter being his brother officer. It ought to be stated that the wives of these two gentle-

men were also to accompany them, and of course those of the shut up bedrooms were unlocked, which had hidden stores of rich though faded garniture. These were brought out; Mrs. Aubrey seemed to put forth her whole energies to the task of preparing a fit reception to this beloved son, and those of his friends whom it was his delight to honour.

Emma and her underlings were on their knees scrubbing for two or three days.

Christine was engaged in polishing tables, rubbing fire irons, burnishing faded gilding, and dexterously mending what had been once magnificent carpets and drapery, pictures and vases were arranged with artistic skill in the three best sitting rooms. Elsie and Anne Cave were turned out of their comfortable sleeping apartment into one much smaller on the north side of the house, as it was suggested that Mrs. Dalton and Mrs. Power would bring their waiting maids, and their double apartments would just accommodate both. Elsie clamoured loudly at the indignity put upon

her and her governess, in turning them out for the accommodation of other people's servants.

As Anne Cave found all her offers of assistance rejected with polite disdain, she began to embellish with all her skill and industry the little bare dirty room apportioned for them. It commanded, however, a pleasant view of the fish pond and side lawn, the weather still continued pitilessly wet, and she had plenty of time to devote to the work. Anne persuaded Emma to scrub the floor and clean the paint. Elsie petitioned her father to command Christine to appportion sufficient carpet from her stores to cover the room completely. White curtains for the bed they were to occupy together were obtained, and these Anne Cave nailed up. She then brought their clothes and arranged them in the chest of drawers, which, not proving large enough, and the chamber being too small to admit of another chest, she was forced to keep her own things in her trunks; and now the room wore

a little better aspect ; but as it would probably be their sleeping apartment for the whole winter, Anne wished to have a coal box which might be filled every morning, thus giving her an opportunity of lighting her fire and sitting by it of an evening if she chose. No coal box suitable for the room was to be found. She resolved to purchase one, and also some drawings to ornament the bare walls, a couple of China vases to hold flowers, and some pretty little polished portable wood shelves to hold her few choice books. Anne was determined their room, if poor, should have its little refinement, and she sent a deferential message to Mrs. Aubrey, requesting a day at Felton, as she wished to purchase winter clothing and other things.

Permission was accorded, and on the first fine day Elsie and Anne Cave went in the carriage to the town of Felton. It may as well be mentioned here, that, on her return to Yanly Manor, after her memorable dinner at the Pigeon, she had attempted to return the

note of ten pounds to Mrs. Aubrey, and had requested her to consider the money she had paid to her mother as her first year's salary. Anne's proposal had been met with polite sarcasm and refined disdain : Mrs. Aubrey informed her that she was not in the habit of giving presents and taking them back again. She intimated, however, that there her bounty would end, and that Miss Cave must, henceforth, look for payment of her salary, for which she had been engaged, to Mr. Harvey Aubrey himself.

Anne Cave saw that she washed her hands completely of her and her affairs. She was, at the same time, jealous and distrustful of her ; still, all went on smoothly, and, on the whole, Anne was happy. Her wardrobe was scantily supplied ; beyond a few print dresses and muslins for summer wear, she had literally nothing decent, for the last winter had nearly used up her winter clothes, so that when she sent word to Mrs. Aubrey that she required

to purchase winter clothing, she told the exact truth.

The fine October day when they drove into Felton, the sunny streets, the clouds of gold and purple that floated in the pale blue of the autumn sky, the fields beyond, the silvery river with the morning mist, the towers of the old church, glowing yellow in the sunshine, the feeling of again visiting the spot, the very spot where her eyes had first rested on Robert, all conspired to elevate her spirits; and it was with a light step that she walked up the High Street, albeit the fresh autumn breeze and early ride made her slightly shiver in her blue muslin dress and thin silk cape. Resolved to consult the taste of him who was ever present to her thoughts, she first asked to look at some black silks; she remembered that Robert had once, in a conversation on taste and dress, given her to understand that the true secret of our continental neighbours' advantage over ourselves,



in the arrangement of colours, lay in the main in keeping to the rule of never mixing more than one colour with black. He assured her that, after a few months' residence in Paris, his eye had been quite pained by the want of harmony observable in the colours of his country-women's dresses.

"Jane Vaughan," he added (this was the day before his departure), "had exquisite taste—white and gold, pink and silver, black and crimson, black and purple, black and rich blue—such were her usual colours, always tastefully blended. But she had lived some time abroad."

"Jane Vaughan could afford to buy fine dresses, Robert," Anne had answered. "I would dress as well if I had the means."

"I believe you would," he had replied. "I don't see much to complain of in your poor little striped muslins; and in your evening pink one you look divine!"

How well preserved had the evening pink one been since, one need scarcely say. The

luxury of a black silk dress, glossy and good, and which cost her two pounds alone, a blue neck ribbon, to wear with it, a warm, everyday dress of dark brown merino, and, lastly, a pink Lama, destined for winter evening wear as being warmer than the admired muslin and exactly of the same hue, some new walking boots and house shoes, a brown cloth cloak, a little black silk bonnet, with pink border inside, some flannels and calicoes for under garments, all these necessary articles were paid for, and nearly all of her money was gone ; she had still a dress-maker to consult with and to ask advice from. The most difficult part of the dress-making was consigned to her care, the rest she would manage at home. She then bought the little vases, the shelves, the drawings, and, lastly, the coal box ; and these things being safely stowed away in the carriage, they returned about mid-day to Yanly.

That evening the guests were to arrive, and Elsie and Anne were served with a cold

and hurried dinner in the dining-room. Two imposing footmen had been hired *pro tem.* from London ; a dinner, fitted for a king, was being cooked in the regions below, the fumes whereof came up in whiffs more delicious than the spices of Araby.

Anne felt for the first time the nothingness of her position, and the firm conviction that a governess was not as good as a real lady, who could create all this commotion and agitation of preparation. As soon as possible, therefore, she hastened to hide her diminished head in her humble dormitory, and having first hung up the drawings, filled the vases with autumnal flowers, placed her books on their portable shelves, and lighted the fire which Emma had laid, she told Elsie it was her intention to keep her own room that evening, that she should work until dark, then Emma would bring candles and tea, and afterwards she had a nice book to read aloud, " Woodstock," one of Sir Walter Scott's novels.

Elsie was delighted. "Who would have thought, Miss Cave," she said, "who could have seen this room three days ago, that it was the same as this nice little place, with this crimson carpet and white curtains. I was in such a rage at first about it, and now it looks much prettier than our other room."

"Yes, Elsie, and you must not throw your things about; you must be very tidy in this room, as it is so small."

When it was dark, Emma brought the tea and candles; she stopped to admire the little chamber when she had put down the tea things. "Lor', Miss," she said, "how comfortable, and how neat and pretty this is. Christine might do as she liked, she couldn't make you untidy and dirty by giving you an untidy room."

While they sat enjoying their room, the loud ringing of the house bell, the scuffling about of feet, and the sound of many voices, gave notice of the arrival of the great folks.

"Elsie," she said, "would you not like to go and see your brother?"

She shook her head—“George does not want to see me; if I went he would only give me his hand and say, ‘How do ye do, Elsie?’ and then not speak to me again all night; besides I ain’t dressed to see the ladies.”

“Am not dressed, Elsie, not ain’t dressed.”

“Am not dressed.”

“But you are dressed well enough, child, to see your brother; while the ladies are dressing for dinner you might speak to him.”

“Bless you, he is in Mamma’s room by this time, and she would pretty soon turn me out.”

So when they had finished tea they sat down to ‘Woodstock,’ which Anne read aloud, and when the great folks had dressed themselves, they sat down to dinner in the dining-room, and the solemn meal lasted two hours; for Elsie was in bed and dropping off to sleep when a tap at the door, followed by the entrance of Christine, astounded her.

“Mamsel—Mr. Harvey Aubrey’s compliments, and will you come down to the draw-

ing-room for to play the piano and see the company?"

"I am not dressed, Christine."

Instinct told her that while it was entirely the troublesome partiality of the attorney which insisted on her appearance, Mrs. Aubrey would be very vexed to the heart at it; and she made no doubt that her old friend had insisted on the point with his characteristic obstinacy, before the lady had yielded, so she resolved not to go. "I am not dressed, Christine."

"I demand the pardon of Mademoiselle, but with a few strokes of the brush to her hair, and the changing of the robe which she wears at present to the very charming one of rose muslin, in which Mademoiselle looks divine [Heavens! had she overheard Robert?] Mademoiselle will be sufficiently dressed for this evening."

"Christine, will you give my respects to Mr. Harvey Aubrey, as well as Mrs. Aubrey, and say that, having a headache, I am

unable to descend to the drawing-room this evening."

"I will not, Mademoiselle, because I perceive you have an open book there, and when people have headaches they do not sit up reading, they go to bed."

Christine's pertinacity puzzled her; she began to alter her opinion. Mrs. Aubrey must wish for her company, or Christine would not so urge it; so she commenced giving her hair the few strokes of the brush needed, and turned over her late purchases to find a pink waistband for the divine muslin. Christine approached the parcel, and loud were her exclamations of delight at her new clothes.

"*Quelle belle robe de soie!* Mamsel might be French, she possesses such pure taste. Mademoiselle is fortunate in possessing such rich friends, who send her money to buy such charming things."

"Christine, you know well that I possess no rich friends who send me money; on the contrary, I have poor friends to whom I send

a part of all I have. It is Mrs. Aubrey who made me such a handsome present, so that I can afford to buy three dresses instead of one." Anne continued: "Mrs. Aubrey having altered her good opinion of me, I would have returned her present on being recalled to the house, but she would not receive it. Had I been turned away, as she at first intended, I should have had no scruples about retaining the money as compensation for such a sudden dismissal. You know all this, Christine. I explained my meaning to Mrs. Aubrey."

"Mon Dieu; how should I know all this?" asked Christine, contemptuously shrugging her French shoulders.

"Why, Mrs. Aubrey would tell you."

"Do you think madame finds your small affairs worth talking about? She has long ago dismissed you from her thoughts. A great mind does not dwell on trifles."

The insolence of the French woman peered forth continually through all her honied phrases, and being by this time dressed to



descend, Anne took the candle and passed out. She went in another direction, but on reaching the second landing, she found that she had not brought her pocket-handkerchief, so hastening back she found the French woman coolly turning over her things, and with her desk reached down from the chest of drawers—her desk containing Robert's three letters; she had fortunately the keys in her pocket.

Christine coloured a little—just a very little—a sickly, yellow red, which came into her hard, dark, withered cheek, and then died out again.

Anne stood in angry amaze.

"You perceive that since you were so wanting in politeness, that you would not show me all your pretty things, I could not prevent myself to come and look at them, Miss Cave."

"And what do you want with my desk?"

"Mon Dieu, I thought it was a box of gloves!"

"Did you? Well, since it is a desk, per-

haps you will have the kindness to leave it alone. Now, if you want to look at my clothes"—just then the noise of their voices roused Elsie, who sleepily demanded what was the matter.

"Not much, dear ; only returning to the room, I found Christine had mistaken my desk for a box of gloves ; she is now looking over my parcel. If you should remain awake while she is here, perhaps you will remind her, should she forget it again, that it is my desk."

Elsie sat up, looking hot and angry, very wide awake, indeed, and with her blue Aubrey eyes flashing fiercely.

"Remind her, indeed—prying thing ! I won't have her here at all. I could not rest with her fidgetting over the things in my room. Go out, you—you—you—"

Elsie's rage was so great that words failed her, and her mind recurring to the book they had been reading, she added—

"You old *noll* of a thing."

Christine's ignorance of English history led her to suppose that old noll was a bad—perhaps a low word. Turning round so that the light of the fire fell full upon her black bombazine dress and geranium-coloured ribbons and head-dress, she said scornfully—

“What a fine country is this England, where the children of the noblesses are suffered to become like the peasants, and where the institutrices teaches swearing and cursing. Courage, Mademoiselle Elsie ! you will soon learn how to flirt and entrap the young men as well as to curse and swear from your governess.”

Here she left the room, but first waited for an answer ; this Anne did not deign to give her, and then she kissed Elsie, and descended to the drawing room.

Who has entered a room, where one feels that the majority there assembled are hostile or indifferent towards us ; where only one is kind, and that one by the others perchance is despised for his kindness ? Such were Anne

Cave's feelings when she entered the great Aubrey drawing room, blazing as it was with the full light of its magnificent chandeliers, its velvet couches—luxurious, though old-fashioned—its richly-gilt cornices, and exquisitely painted ceiling.

Mrs. Aubrey leant back on a raised ottoman, as though slightly fatigued with her exertions; she conversed affably with a lady whom Anne found to be the Honourable Mrs. Charles Dalton. A scarcely visible nod did she vouchsafe to Anne on her entrance; and Mrs. Dalton having honoured her with a slight glance of careless and haughty inquiry, turned again towards Mrs. Aubrey and renewed the conversation.

The three younger gentlemen stood near the fire-place, and with them was another lady, whose back was turned towards Anne Cave when she entered, and who did not give her an opportunity of judging of her personal charms till afterwards. The gentlemen all bowed stiffly, coldly, distantly; proud,

proud, proud, did all that company appear; proud seemed the gilded room, the marble tables, the Sevres vases, the gracefully sweeping draperies—the whole apartments seemed wrapped in a veil of pride and superiority. She felt she was the meanest conditioned person in that room, and that every one there was haughty, cognisant of the fact. Mr. Harvey Aubrey was polite to excess, he advanced, and with old world gallantry led her by the hand to a seat near the fire place.

“I felt sure you must be so dull up stairs,” said he, “and indeed, for my part, I think we are not much livelier down here. You must cheer us by playing some of your best pieces, that is, if you are not too tired, but I think you look fatigued. Allow me to present you to my son George;” and George bowed and was presented.

Anne was not confused at the introduction as she had been when meeting the elder brother in the draper’s shop at Felton. No, she

looked him full in his fair aristocratic face, and she said to him mentally, "So you are George—are you the model Aubrey?" He glanced back at her probably with the mental sentence, "And you are the governess, are you? The nursery is the fittest place for you, where you should have eaten your thick bread and butter at five o'clock, and you ought now to be dreaming of your mother, mending stockings, or giving music lessons by the side of your young charge." A second glance at the countenance before her induced her to revoke the idea that George Aubrey could or would harbour thoughts so vulgar, so common place as those she had attributed to him. No, he could scarcely know what thick bread and butter meant, and as to stocking mending, where could he possibly have seen such drudgery perpetrated?

Avaunt, Anne Cave, with the lowly born thought; that exquisitely handsome face before you, with its evidently habitual expression of unqualified hauteur, conveys no

meaning beyond a look of haughty nonchalance.

Yes, George Aubrey was proud with a somewhat offensive though perfectly well regulated and quiet pride. He was tall, and slight, and graceful; he had small white hands; he looked a thorough gentleman; he was unobtrusively and becomingly dressed, from his perfectly made boots to his well-arranged fair hair, kept shorter than that of Robert. There was a slight similarity between the brothers, George's features were delicate and almost feminine in their outline, his complexion was very pink and white, much fairer than Robert's; his lips were full and rosy, voluptuous, but of great beauty. At his slightest smile you caught glances of the white gleaming of his teeth, but with all these advantages his smile was wanting in the sweetness of Robert's. What prevented this young man's face from being effeminate, he wore no hair on his chin or lip? And yet, if you looked into his dark blue-eyes, you read

there strength of purpose, deep-meaning, bright intelligence. The brow too was broad, and you felt that a powerful intellect had taken up its abode there.

Anne did not note all this at one view, but it was the result of the conclusions she came to after seeing him a few times.

Could it be that she was contemplating, taking precedence of this exalted gentleman by becoming the wife of his elder brother? The next person on whom her curious glance fell was the lady whom I mentioned as having her back turned towards her on her entrance. Now the full blaze of her large, dreamy, dark eyes were cast full upon her; she was what is called a fine woman, and about thirty years old; her smooth, glossy black hair was wound around her head in a fashion peculiarly her own. Her figure was very fully developed, and she wore a dress of crimson velvet made too low in the bodice to suit Anne's simple school-girl notions of delicacy and propriety; her teeth were magni-



ficent, but the hues of her complexion were too darkly brown and deeply red to be beautiful, yet, with it all, she was a fine, nay, a handsome woman. This was Mrs. Power, the wife of a gallant officer in the Guards, and he came next under her observation ; he was a fine, hale, florid man in the autumn of life, fifty winters at least had passed over him, thickly strewing his brown hair with grey, and enlarging his bulk to a rather unsoldier-like size. The expression of his face ordinarily was a good-tempered, placid one, and the love of good eating and drinking was among his strongest characteristics. That he could feel, and deeply too, when roused, and that he was as true and honest-hearted a gentleman as ever breathed, were conclusions Anne came to afterwards.

The Honourable Charles Dalton and his lady were both young, fashionable, fair complexioned, and their high birth excepted, common place, conventional in manners and ideas, and proud with what she supposed was

the proper kind of aristocratic pride, and as such ought to be respected. It is impossible not to give the Honourable Charles Dalton his full title; he had come down to Yanly for the express purpose of winning over the votes of the tenants against the next general election. He was rich and his wife was rich; they were liberal, too, in a proper, conventional way, and he for his part was able and willing to bribe. Bribery was in vogue in those days. Mr. Harvey Aubrey, whose ancestors had represented the county for upwards of two hundred years, was not willing to stand the expense of a contested election, even had his tastes or talents been of a political nature, which they were not. George Aubrey, for reasons best known to himself, was most anxious to promote his friend's interest, and Mrs. Aubrey warmly seconded him.

As to Anne Cave, she was no politician, she had never studied politics beyond a very sincere love for her country, and a strong desire

to see her great and prosperous, with a wish to uphold all her free institutions, and a feeling of enthusiasm when hearing of her victories by sea or land. She did not understand the respective merits of whig and tory, and was in profound ignorance when they spoke of Mr. Brocton, a millionaire of mediocre family, who intended to support the whig interest. Anne fancied the ladies and gentlemen around her did not seem to have much more idea than herself what would be the conduct of either member on entering parliament, but only who had the best chance of getting in.

The memory of the French revolution had, at the time of which I write, scarcely ceased to be a thing shuddered at. Europe, whose constitutions had been shaken to their centres, yet vibrated to the echoes of that terrible time. Buonaparte was banished ; the Bourbon dynasty restored ; France, at least to all outward seeming, tranquillised ; England was peaceful and prosperous ; yet men could not forget what had been.

Anne Cave, as a clergyman's daughter, had been brought up with the idea that toryism meant order, religion, and prosperity, and that whigism was only another name for rebellion, license, and, if fully carried out, bloodshed and outrage. She was in a mist of obscurity, and when she heard John Brocton, the whig member, spoken of, she set him down as a bad, unprincipled man, with the ferocity of a Robespierre and the fervid cruelty of a Camille Desmoulins. Forgive her, reader, for she was only nineteen, and ignorant. The tory interests and virtue were synonymous, and the Honorable Charles Dalton consequently came in for a large share of her respect, although she could not deny that he treated her as a thing of nought, for he never addressed a word or look to her the whole evening, neither did his graceful and tastefully attired wife. Anne sat and sat till she felt truly uncomfortable; she was not asked to play. Mr. Harvey Aubrey dozed in his arm chair.

She felt herself very considerably in the way, but she lacked courage to rise and walk down that long and brilliantly lighted drawing room, and so take leave of the gay company. No, she sat, and sat in durance vile, when a deep gruff voice addressed her. The remark was not fraught with excessive wisdom or brilliancy, but it caused her to find the use of her tongue, and it led to other results. It was Captain Power who spoke, and the question he put to her was this—

“Do you feel the fire too hot, Miss Cave?”

He had called her by her name, he had recognised her identity; there is said to be a grandeur in simplicity, so she supposed there was grandeur in the reply she made him—decidedly it was fraught with simplicity—

“I think it is a little, sir.”

“Then you had better move your place,” and the stout officer rose, and placed a light chair for her at a convenient distance from the fire, while the young men looked lazily on.

She thanked him for that slight though kind attention—she thanked him deep down in her girl's heart, and with her lips she thanked him also—

“You are very kind.”

“No ; I perceived your face was burning,” he answered, and then began a common place though pleasant chat, not to call it conversation ; he asked her how she liked the country, they discussed the weather during the past summer, the town of Felton and its church. He had travelled in Cumberland in his youth, and professed to retain a very lively recollection of her own village of Burnside. He described the little ivy grown church, the neat and primitive appearance of the congregation, and the pretty bearing of the Sunday school children in their brown stuff dresses and tippets ; the burn with its slippery stones he had waded through, and the wood of ash and fir trees he had lost his way in when a youth. He asked her at length if she had ever visited London, and when he heard she

had only passed through it once, he expressed much surprise, as most Londoners generally do when told by a country person, who they have found worth talking to, that he or she has never visited the great Babel. Just at this juncture Anne heard a voice melodiously sweet calling her by name; she turned and encountered George Aubrey.

“Will you be good enough to play the accompaniment of a duet I am going to sing with Mrs. Power, Miss Cave?”

“Yes, with pleasure.”

He spoke haughtily and commandingly, though softly, and she accompanied him to the piano; he turned over the heap of music and presented to her the duet—“Du du leigst—Am I not fondly thine own;” they took their places one on each side of her, and when she had played the symphony their voices mingled in the sweet air, tastefully, tenderly, and passionately; they sang the English words, and while Anne admired the rich, rare tones of Mrs. Power’s contralto, she could not

avoid regretting that her kind, good husband was not there to take a part in the song in place of the gay and youthful officer ; when the duet ended, Mrs. Power was requested by her husband, whose tastes were simple, to sing a ballad, and he pleaded hard for the Scotch air—"Robin Adair ;" to Anne's surprise she refused, saying—

"I can't bear to sing alone, as long as there is anybody to sing with."

"But just one, Sophia, give us Robin Adair or Kate Kearney. I won't ask you again ; you can sing it without the book."

"But how can you expect people to play without? Miss Whats-a-name," with a petulant glance, "she can't, I am sure."


Anne hastened to assure her that she could easily furnish an accompaniment to either of the ballads mentioned. Thus pressed the lady complied, and with much pathos sang Robin Adair ; her voice was thrilling, and at the conclusion of the last verse Mr. George Aubrey said, softly—



“ You are yourself to-night, Sophia.”

She cast a glance upon him, such a look, there was no mistaking its import. Anne Cave felt humiliated as she sat at the instrument, guilty in being an unwilling witness to looks and words and inuendoes at which her soul revolted. Duet after duet was she requested to play for this couple, who were shamelessly carrying on a desperate flirtation in the very presence of the husband. Italian music full of ardour, and taken from the most enthusiastic love scenes of the opera, was she forced to play that these might sing; if older and wiser people in the room did not mark this, how was it that she an untaught school-girl did so? Just because she was nearer to them, and could see glances and hear whispers unintelligible to the rest of the company, because she herself loved deeply, and just at those words and tones in the singing where her own feelings would have been most deeply touched, she saw Mrs. Power, with eyes brim full of tears, with voice half-broken

with emotion, and at the end of the song she heard half-uttered words, nothing in themselves, much when compared with each other, and she rose from the piano with the firm conviction that the unhappy woman before her with the dreamy dark eyes—loved passionately—loved the calm, fair haired George Aubrey. Did he love her? Anne prayed not. She saw nothing but caution in his cold, keen, blue eyes; she heard but the tone of a self-possessed man when he spoke, although his voice was as soft as the breathing of a flute. He was five or six years younger than the handsome syren before him, and Anne hoped and trusted that he was innocent of all real and known wrong, although she could not but blame him for the encouragement he evidently gave. George was Robert's step-brother; there was much in that fact to interest and touch her feelings. Both brothers at first sight were of haughty aspect, though she believed that the hardness and hauteur of Robert were assumed to show his hostility to



his stepmother and sister, and all connected with them ; that of George was far more real, but still she repeated that he was Robert's brother, and she felt more inclined to blame Mrs. Power than him for their evident flirtation.

“ If there be truth in physiognomy,” she said, mentally, as she seated herself in the chair placed for her by Captain Power, on quitting the instrument. “ If there be truth in physiognomy, you are as free from debasing vices as my noble Robert ; you are no drunkard, no sensualist ; you are proud of your birth, haughty by nature, vain. Yes, vain of your person, which Robert is not, and he is far handsomer than you are, for all your pink and white complexion, Grecian nose, and small white hands. In my opinion at least, perhaps not in Mrs. Power's ; how her eyes rest everlastingly upon him ; and he, how self-possessed, how elegantly indifferent—now, yes, now, for the first time, those keen

blue eyes of his have positively condescended to rest upon Anne's face."

She blushed crimson and looked down, and when the servants entered with refreshments and handed about the creams, coffee, cakes, fruits, wines, &c., she raised her eyes furtively towards George once more, and to her dismay those eyes were still fixed upon her, and with a strange searching expression; a mocking smile too rests upon his lips.

"Ah, his mouth is not like Robert's; the lips are fuller. At present half the pride seems driven from his countenance;" she read there another meaning. What it is she cannot tell.

The Honourable Mrs. Dalton said, after taking a cup of coffee, that she felt extremely fatigued. This was the signal for breaking up the party. Anne managed to effect her retreat with a bow to the company generally, and a warm hand shaking from Captain Power. Mr. Harvey Aubrey slept placidly in his arm chair.

George did not vouchsafe her a word or a look, and she found her way to her little dormitory in the dark; the fire had burnt out in her absence, but Emma had placed a large wax lighted taper on the mantel shelf.

Elsie was still awake. "Oh, dear Miss Cave, I am so glad you are come. I could hardly keep awake," and indeed her eyes were heavy with sleep.

Anne said, "My dear Elsie, why need you have kept awake so long?"

"Oh, to take care of your desk, and to see if Christine came in again; Emma, besides, has been in with that candle, and she stopped and talked a long time with Mrs. Power's maid Fanny; they did not know I was awake, and somehow I could not help listening to them, for I was half asleep, and I felt too lazy to tell them I was awake."

"No excuses, Elsie; you wanted to hear their conversation."

"Perhaps I did, for Fanny was going on so about what a temper Mrs. Power's was, and

how she hated her, that it was enough to make anybody listen. She told Emma that Mrs. Power's father was not a real gentleman, only a kind of horse jockey, but that Mrs. Power's mother was a lady, and she ran away to get married to this Mr. Peel, and he spent everything, and beat her, and her friends would not notice her, and they had two children, a son and a daughter, and they were not sent to school, and they grew up so ignorant, and lazy, and untidy; for their mamma was always crying and was ill besides, and at last, when this girl Sophia was sixteen, her mother died; then the proud friends were sorry they had been so unkind, and when it was too late they began to repent; so they sent Sophia to a boarding school, but the boy would not have anything at their hands; he went to sea and has never been heard of since.

“Sophia was two years at school, and then she went on a visit to her fine lady aunt, Mrs. Mortlake, she was only eighteen then, and

Captain Power was on a visit there, and he took a great fancy to this girl, and wanted to marry her, and she was forced into the match by her friends, although Captain Power was forty years old; but he is very rich, so she married him, and Fanny says instead of being grateful she is the spitefullest and nastiest temper possible. She bangs about her ladies' maids; no one will stay long with her, and Fanny, who has only lived with her three months, is going to leave before Christmas."

"Elsie, I don't much admire Fanny for telling all her mistress's affairs to a stranger like Emma."

"You haven't heard the funniest part," continued Elsie, with a laugh. "Fanny actually says that Mrs. Power is in love with George; fancy, in love with my brother George, just as if she *could* be, when she is married. She told Emma that George was continually at the house, but Fanny said, 'one thing is, that he does not return it;' and then she began to praise him up. 'Isn't he beau-

tiful,' she asked Emma; she said he is the finest young gentleman that comes to our house in town."

"'Oh!' said Emma, 'you should see Master Robert; he is the one; we all think a great deal more of him than of Master George.' You know that's how Emma talks; I am only taking her off."

"Elsie, it is a great pity that you should hear servants' gossip. Another time I shall lock the door if I have to leave the room, and then nobody can disturb you. To-morrow you will be ill through having kept awake so long, but it is not your fault."

"Ill!" retorted Elsie, "I am never ill. I am as strong as a little horse, or a plough boy."

"Well, go to sleep now, dear, and don't repeat a word of what you heard the servants say to anybody; it might make mischief."

A change had indeed fallen upon Yanly Manor—late hours, grand dinners, the gentlemen spending the mornings in the billiard



room when it was wet, or shooting on the estate when it was fine ; they canvassed for votes, too, for the Honourable Charles Dalton, and rode over to Cherrywoods and secured the vote of Mr. Eastdom. Anne, the meanwhile, spent a regular retired, and on the whole, comfortable life. She and Elsie always dined at two o'clock, and after their early dinners, often had a delightful walk in the Park or surrounding fields, those fine, October days, misty, yet sunny, when the rich, woodland country wore a golden livery, when the smell of burning weeds used to come wafted on the breath of the cool, yet soft air, when the autumn sky was faintly blue, and the fresh coloured clouds were floating in bright patches hither and thither ; those fine October days lived long in Anne's memory, as indeed did all the days she passed at Yanly Manor. About this time Elsie's mind opened wonderfully ; the style of books she was accustomed to read began to work upon her ; she took great delight in

history, and Anne was oftentimes astonished at the shrewd, sensible remarks she made; her extreme childishness was wearing off; the soul and the mind were awakening in this dear little one.

One day they were returning home through the village of Woodbury. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and dusk was beginning to creep over the country side, when suddenly Elsie said,

"Miss Cave, do you know Robert's friend, Charles Higham, is coming here as curate. Our vicar is not going to preach any more. Are you glad? you know you can't hear old Mr. Bretts' sermons, he speaks in such a whisper; but perhaps he never told you of him, they were college friends, and afterwards they travelled in Germany together."

"He did tell me of a friend who travelled with him in Germany, but he did not tell me his name."

"Well, this is the one," said Elsie. "Charles Higham used to visit us once, but

I was so little I can hardly remember him ; he is not at all rich. His uncle, Sir John Higham, wanted him to go into the army, but he would be a clergyman, so his uncle left him nothing at all in his will. Mamma used to fancy he and Emily liked each other, but I heard her say when the news came that Sir John was dead, and had left all his property away from Charles, ‘Emily, it won’t do for you to think any more of him, he will be nothing but a poor curate all his life now,’ and Emily said, ‘of course not, mamma,’ and this morning I heard mamma tell George that as they had all been so intimate, she must ask him to dinner on Sunday, and George said ‘Sunday, why my dear mamma, the sanctified Charles would never commit such a crime as to dine out on a Sunday : ask him next week,’ so I suppose you won’t see him till you see him in the pulpit, the day after to-morrow.”

Anne felt extremely impatient to see this high-souled, self-denying, young man, Robert’s friend.

On Sunday morning they all breakfasted together, visitors and all. She had scarcely seen anything of Mr. George Aubrey since the night of her first introduction to him, nearly a week since, but on this particular Sunday morning he sauntered gracefully up to the fire-place, and he fixed his very meaning blue eyes on her, saying,

"Miss Cave, do you go to church this morning?"

"Yes, Mr. Aubrey."

"Well, upon my word," he said, wearily dropping into a chair, "I think I'll go too, it's such a bore here in the country to know what to do with one's time, so if you will accept of my escort, we will go and hear this young parson's speechifying. I dare say none of the rest of the company," with a careless glance round the table, "will be at the trouble to go, for it's a little inclined for rain."

Now one can't imagine what possessed Anne to turn her eyes at this juncture in the direction where Mrs. Power was sitting, but

it is a fact that she did so, and encountered a look of savage jealousy (if ever there was such a look on earth) from the lady in question. When next she let her eyes rest on George Aubrey, he was cutting the top off his egg with imperturbable calmness, but his peculiar mocking smile sat on his lip. Was he showing off his power over his neighbour's wife; was he showing it to Anne, and making her the instrument of torture to this woman, who unhappily loved him. She felt angry with George, but she did not speak. She hurried her breakfast and quitted the room.

It was drawing near ten o'clock, the hour at which service commenced at Woodbury.

When Elsie and her governess were dressed, they sallied forth. Anne had on her new brown cloak and dress to match, and her black silk bonnet. No Sunday School child could have been dressed more plainly, but scarcely were they on the lawn when they were joined by Mrs. Power, in a light green brocaded silk, a puce velvet mantle and bonnet to

match with elegant feathers, and massive golden bracelets on her plump arms. She was rather paler than usual, and looked very handsome. Anne thought she came and pushed herself almost rudely between her and Elsie.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Power, "you like going to church?"

"Yes, Mrs. Power."

"Do you like church in town or country best?"

"It is one's duty to go to church in town or country."

"I did not ask you which was your duty ; I asked you which you liked best."

"I never lived in a town, Mrs. Power."

"Never, never," with a sneer. "Oh, then you are a romantic young lady, I suppose. I dare say, now, you do a great deal in the Sunday Schools and district visiting in the village, don't you?"

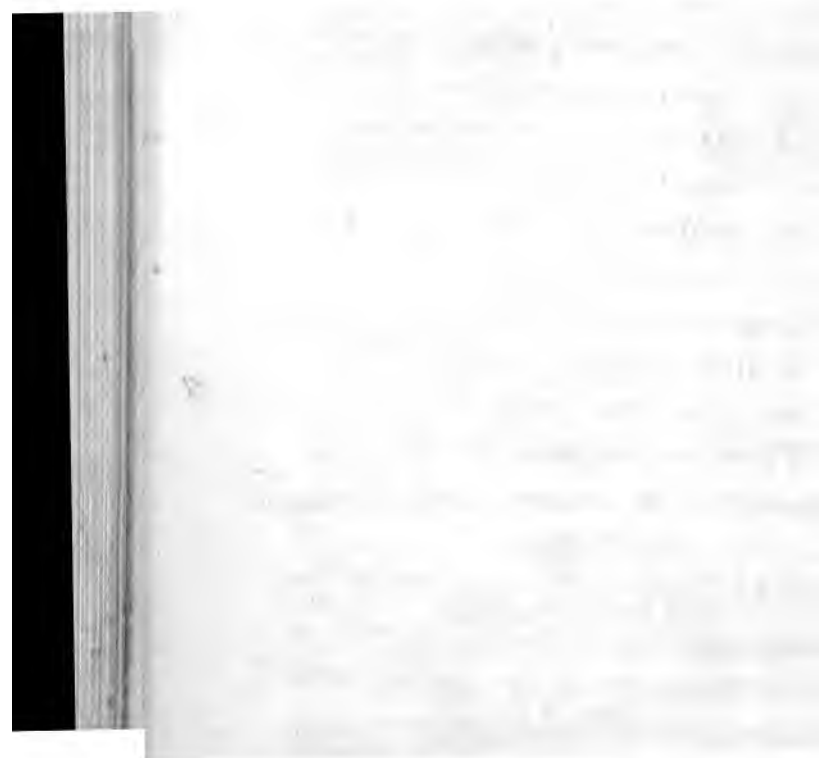
"Nothing at all. I have no time, as I am governess to Miss Elsie Aubrey."

“Oh, indeed.”

She paused, as if to think what spiteful thing she should say next, when they were joined by the Hon. Charles Dalton and his lady. She was elegantly attired in mauve brocade and black lace. Mrs. Power joined them. George Aubrey was near; he sauntered along alone, addressing general remarks to all, taking no notice of Mrs. Power. He entered the little primitive church of Yanly just as the clerk was giving out the first hymn. There was not room for all in the Aubrey pew, and the red-faced Mrs. Plumptre opened the friendly door of her seat for Miss Cave to enter.

A young man in a white surplice, with a sweet serious face was in the reading desk, but the new curate of Yanly deserves another chapter.

END OF VOL. I.





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